



Virginia
of the Air Lanes
By Herbert Quick



Illustration by [illegible]

UNDER THE LIFT OF THE WIND THE CAN DRAGGED TO THE EDGE, SLIPPED OFF
AND DROVE THERE THREE HUNDRED PATIONS IN THE AIR

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Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Leigh

I

WHEN RAIDERS FELL FROM THE SKY



FOR twenty shimmering miles the Gulf beach lay in the sun, a white straight edge against blue. Misted through the wet-haze glistened Sand Island light-house, now when obscured by the smoke plume of a freighter standing in past Port Morgan for Mobile. It was early forenoon. The yellow

globe of the morning-balloons at the fort shone like the dome of some austere new architecture hung high into the pulsating air. Two men for down the coast toward Pensacola caught the far-off splendor, and noted, in the very act of casting off from it, a long, cigar-shaped smudge—"an immense elongated bubble of quicksilver." It floated seaward, rounded to, stood a moment and on, liberating like a balancing top.

"She's bound for N'Yardina, Ah reckon, sah."

The speaker was a typical Gulf fisherman, bearded, tall, soft of speech, courteous as a diplomat, barefooted, weathered in garments and skin. Over his cheeks and nose were scattered broad brown blotches which might possibly have been classified as freckles. He held a cigarette, lighted it, and turned his almost colorless eyes on his companion, replying, "She's she's bound for N'Yardina."

In the men of the young man there was something of kinship to the elder—as there might be in a New England chorister or an ignorant something like his forty-second cousin fishing on the Newfoundland Banks. The softness of speech was modified to a subtle firmness and a subdued decision. The slight,

tall frame was arrowy and erect, as if the youth had breathed a winter air and imbibed a latent self-esteem, expressed in the hint of indifference in speech—if one may call that reserve which was still soft and almost caressing. The boy had even the scars of mottled freckling overlaying a pink glow. He wore a blue flannel shirt with a bright silk cravat, his shoes were scarred gray by the beach sand, and his well-shaped hat was powdered with it, his trousers were of rather gray and striped down the side—seemingly a part of some obsolete uniform. He sat on a great square timber half buried in the sand, and had been studying a blue-green Portuguese man-of-war cut ashore and rolled up before the breeze, dragging its yard-long tentacles. On the beam lay a steel square, a brace and a bit, a roll of blue-prints, some steel drills, and a book of logarithms. He had returned to the sea-blackbird, investigating it with the tip of a dive oil can, and had mentally formulated a parallel between this helpless thing, beaten about by every breeze, and the driftlike balloon up the coast, when the speech of the older man made him look up.

His face was small for a man's, his eyes dark, his lip blackened by a tiny mustache. In the manner of one who does not feel obliged to reply to the speech of a constant companion he picked up a pair of binoculars from a case-up crate and studied the distant air-ship.

"Mo' likely bound for Pensacola, Captain," he said. "She's coming this way—a C-odge with bow rollers. Winter-weather, I reckon."

"Then she don't hear what she goes," replied the fisherman. "It's the way o' that way, yet so come lady ways."

"I don't know that it matters," said the

*Several of the terms used by Mr. Quick in this narrative are recent names for old things the need for which has sprung up on the rapid development of air navigation. AIRCRAFT, or AIR-VEHICLE, is the accurate term for the "driftlike," a high balloon. For the ordinary glider-like balloon, in the aeronautic—the general term for any gas-supported aerial device. The reader who recalls the pictures of Count Zeppelin's airship and other similar constructions will have an excellent idea of what an aircraft such as the *She's* like—Kilgore's Note.

young man, "whether they see us or not; but I reckon we'll go under the shed."

"All right, Miss' Theodo'," answered the captain. "Hysk's doin' the popchute ag'in!"

The aeronaut, drawing nearer, resembled like a great silver moon. The men admired her as they walked ashore through soft trodden sand, down to a lower level of yellowed palm-trees, and scaled a steep down-slope thicketed with scrub-oaks. Beyond was a deeper hollow quite out of sight of the sea, but hidden continually by its roar. Here was hidden a cabin of rough boards with a wide veranda or "gallery." Abutting on the cabin by one end was a spacious shed, without visible door or window. So thoroughly was the edifice concealed by the oak scrub and the low-growing bastard spruce that one might have passed a dozen times within a stone's throw of it without seeing it, and even from airships its dark roof powdered with blown sand was well-nigh invisible. Under the gallery was perfect safety from observation from aloft.

As seen through the glass, the air-ship was corded to impressive bulk. Her bow rudder stood aloft—a stripe of brown against the silver fall of her bligs. On the rounded side ran the darker line of a toy aeroplane—a matter of appearance rather than use—and along beneath by a gasometer nozzle, steady as the deck of a liner, hung her roomy car, the engine-room aloft, the three great screws half invisible like vibrant bees' wings. On the forward deck was a splash of white and red like a brilliant gown, and grouped about it were two or three darker forms of men.

"How she cracks on!" cried the young man. "No end of power—the new piston-cylinder fan-type rigging, I suppose!"

"She'll be worth about lo' bits when we get through, Miss' Theodo'," said the captain.

"Ain't she shootin' off?"

She was, though with no knowledge of them. She roared to the north and stood inland as if to cross Little Lagoon, that beautiful salt lake which for two miles lies within sound of the Gulf surf, but is separated from it by a bare wilderness of dunes; and by a map-pole.

swinging movement she threw her whole vast sweep of broadside open to their gaze. The captain's dinner eye now made out the woman and the two men on her deck, while Theodo's Carson's, keen for such a sight, and armed with a glass, observed that the woman wore a broad hat of vivid red, a scarf of the same color, and—a woman would have told him—a peal gown. The young man knew only that it was white.

"They're past the Palmetto Beach resorts," observed Carson, "and——"

"Eight mile past," interrupted the captain. "They're on this side o' Bon Secour."

"Making for the hotels on the lagoon," said the young man.

"They betta' meet," said the fishermen. "They's a norther comin' out."

Carson scanned the sky for signs of the "norther," but saw nothing more interesting than a blue sky lamed by a few white scurries of cloud puffing up from the north. "I see no sign of a blow that she can't be held to by her engines," said he. "The sky looks fine."

"They'll sho' hev a fight to keep from blowin' out to sea," retorted the captain, "unless they tie up. What they doin' now, Miss' Theodo'?"

"Why," said Carson, studying the aeronaut with the glass and clipping off his sentences as the ascending evolution of the incident far up there in the blue rendered every utterance obsolete before it was finished, "why, they have thrown off a package of—it's mechanism—of some sort—in operation, and— They're making a tow of it, or— They're reversing and rounding to! See them drift off! They're excited and all a-buck about something. Heavens! See that thing shoot up! It's some sort of a helicopter, I believe—and the girl's alone in the basket, Captain! Alone, I say! Why did they— She's lost control—she's lost! It's shooting over this way and coming down! It will—it will— My God! My God!"

The thing had parted from the great aeronaut like an arrow scored from its seat on some great animal. It was a little quack topped with a broader, mushroom-shaped

* The heli-sphere belongs to a type of air-manipulator entirely different from the aerostat. It is an aerostat, or "air machine," which is the correct term for a heavier-than-air machine that flies like a bird by power. The popular name for them is dirigibles, or "aeroplanes," though some are run such as the wing that the Virginia Beachers' men have is an airship, supported still by the pressure of plane surfaces in the air. The heli-sphere is an aerostat, but not an airship, and flies by means of propellers revolving horizontally. That implied by "My God" in this story is a light ray supported under a single pair of propellers, the whole thing being possible and compact far beyond anything of the present day. It is of interest to note that Thomas A. Edison has been quoted as expressing confidence in the heli-sphere as the solution of the problem of aviation.—*Edison's Note.*

blimmer which Carson knew for the revolving blades of a helicopter—that insolent toy that promised so much for the conquest of the air and paid so little. For a moment it paused, sucked along in the wake of the huge ship as if in awe; then it shot upward like a fly speeding from a floating bubble, leaving the silver air ship far below. The two spectators drew their breath sharply in, their hearts frozen in fascinated apprehension.

The airship floated fifteen hundred feet, perhaps, above the tall pines in the shadow of the narrow isthmus dividing the lagoon from the Gulf. The slow flapping buzzards on their way to some reported feast over near Three Rivers never noticed the glistering edge of the giant craft, so high she soared above them, but the helicopter flew like a rocket, up, up, above the balanced ship, so straight into the cool heights of the islets that those remaining on the deck it had left long behind the overhanging hull of the second.

But the men on the beach saw it—saw it rise skyward like a boy's dart until they died-died in the abyss that yawned between sea and earth, saw it struck by the far-reaching helter vanguard of the north wind predicted by the fishes-capacity, saw it hurled southward before the blast like a feather, and then, as if with diving engine, saw it fall, curving obliquely toward them like a projectile heated outward and downward from the battlements of highest heaven. And Carson gripped the humiliated column fiercely, for he was young, he thought of the girl with the red hair, and his heart was gripped as in a vise.

The *Cinder* had a name. She was the *Rec*, owned by Mr. Finley Shayne, and her home port was Shayne's Hold, in the Caymills. Those whose familiarity with the scope, power, and spectacular success of Mr. Shayne's operations in Aerostatic Power stood in the latter part of the first quarter of the present century well surmise that the *Rec* was the finest product of the art of aviation constructed up to that time. Her speed, her sturdiness, her airworthiness, her luxurious appointments—the fame of these had preceded her to the Gulf resorts, where she awaited favorable breezes to Cayan and from island to island in the *Avilles*—an attractive itinerancy, but rather hazardous, the aviator being an unmade craft for the open sea.

This fateful morning she had been moored in the aerial harbor at Mobile in her berth

hard by the lift near the Blumville station. Mrs. Shayne, a native Mobilian, pleaded indignation; but went out to see some old houses dear to her youth. Mr. Shayne and their guest, Mr. Max Silberberg, had insisted upon the presence of Virginia Suarez, Mr. Shayne's niece, on a trip down the bay in the *Rec* to witness the demonstration of a new flying-machine, and she had yielded.

The inventor, a suspicious, busy, middle-aged man, proved personally objectionable to Miss Suarez because his thumbs turned back so far that the sight of them made her feel creepy, and as he gesticulated freely while denouncing all devices for aerial navigation except his own, his thumbs were much in evidence. He showed a wonderful capacity for fury, denouncing passionately all who said that his helicopter might not be the key to the problem of aviation. Virginia was relieved by his going off to convince the engineer that the *Rec*'s screws were fundamentally wrong in construction.

"Unfortunate devil!" said Silberberg.

"Why?" she queried. "Because of those aerial thumbs?"

"Because he failed to please you," replied Silberberg, with the biting sarcasm of the "phases" that constituted the one race-bruising slip in his speech. "To displease you—the greatest calamity!"

"I don't believe he feels it much," said she.

"Another misfortune," he replied—"not to know what he's losing. Yes, he's an unfortunate devil."

Virginia rubbed Winter back, crooked thumbs, fore, and all, for as thumbs as yours could be so offensive as the unshaved presence of Mr. Silberberg, the head of the Federated Misch Concern, controlling the copper, gold, and silver output of a continent. He was an constant upon little encroachments on her reserve, as he teased about with rags and deck-chairs, tucking her wraps about her as they rose into the high south-blowing upper drift, constantly touching her with his bediamonded fingers in little ways, his breath, heavy with cigarette, floating to her like a whiff from some fabled smoking room, that Virginia washed herself anywhere so it was away from Silberberg.

She felt herself drawn at his head by her suit. Little familiarity which in another would not have offended seemed like the unspeakable liberties of prospective purchase with shoes offered in the market. She was getting married and almost hysterical. Silber-

berg's slight baldness, running up in shining rows from his forehead, his well-groomed granness of body, his oily black curls, made of him a beauty seldom gleaming over the lust asperations from Cicada. And yet his appearance and behavior were not inherently bad—the situation made them understandable. Perhaps Mrs. Shayne's tributes to his greatness, and her emphasis on him as an opportunity open to Virginia, a more dependent, were more chargeable with producing this tension (of which Silberberg was quite aware) than anything actually done by him.

"So you think, Aunt Marie," Virginia had said, "that Mr. Silberberg is one of the great ones of the earth?"

"Most certainly!" rejoined Mrs. Shayne. "He is retaining and increasing the enormous wealth and power inherited——"

"From old Israel Silberberg?" supplied Virginia.

"Virginia!" said Mrs. Shayne. "We should not mention an origin of which Max never speaks! But to do what he is doing takes a great man. Your uncle will tell you so."

Silberberg made the hay of courtship in the run of opportunity. Virginia pondered on her aunt's standard of greatness. The dark line of pines at the fort drew nearer; beyond lay the Gulf, a sparkling, blue, outspread diagram.

"Where's Uncle Finky?" she asked. "We are getting a long way south."

"Giving the helicopter a private examination," replied Silberberg. "It is a happiness to me that he is, but the inventor would go wild if he knew the sort of expert his previous machine is left with."

"Wild?" repeated Virginia. "Lonesome?"

Above the part of the screen came the angry voice of the inventor in the engine-room above the *Ree's* second engine for some remark derogatory to helicopters—he was already quite wild enough, Virginia thought.

"Why don't we try his machine?" she asked. "Must we go out over the Gulf? Isn't the bay big enough?"

"Mr. Shayne wants to pick up a speculator at the fort," replied Silberberg. "The man who wrote up the Chinese war-aerostats. He's here on some aeronautical business for the army."

Miss Saurin gave her attention to the wonderful helicopter spread about her and below her. For a moment she could dimly make out the aerial tractor at Mobile, a cluster of black-

colored bubbles floating over the old city. To starboard lay the gardens and orchards of the western shore. The white scarp of the eastern cliffs gleamed through the haze far to the northeast past the sharp spit of Muller Point. Away to the east lay the wide, blue Bon Secour armistice, beyond which she imagined she saw the triangular splash of Perdido Bay. Virginia looked and wished she were alone, or that Silberberg might for a moment be content to pay his court by being rather than by doing.

A battleship was coaling at the Fort Mingen wharf, her decks alive with bluejackets, and while Virginia watched them the automobile telephone was wound down and brought word that Captain Wickham could not accompany them. At Shayne's order they cut off, and it was then that Theodore Carson and the captain, after a run along the beach, had observed their ship.

The *Aer* crawled to the west to avoid the inhibited passage over the batteries, and stood east along the beach. Winner abandoned his quarrel and came forward to make the test. He set the helicopter on the dock, where it stood unsteadily on its slender bamboo legs, its pointer hanging over the rail, its tip, cranked by the screw-ribs, shored a little outboard for the launching.

"How will you get her off?" asked Mr. Shayne.

"Easy enough," answered Winner tartly.

"Maybe we'd better make a descent for you," suggested Silberberg. "It may be one of these terrestrial helicopters."

"I'll ask when I want you to go down," replied Winner, glaring. "You'll see whether it's a ground machine or not. Can I take down a section of that rail?"

"Certainly," answered Mr. Shayne. "But don't let the helicopter topple off. It might fall on a fisherman. What are you doing, Virginia?"

The girl had stepped forward as if to take a seat in the little carry car of the helicopter. "Let me sit in it," said she. "I want to imagine how you feel when you get out into space."

"I wish you would," said Winner. "It will hold her still. It's perfectly safe."

Virginia, laughing at playing paper-weight, entered the car, where she sat illuminated by the inventor's turned-back thumb as he went over the bearings, the lubrication, the feed, and the ignition, and with a wail of reassurance to her started the tiny engine. Softly,

steadily, the finely adjusted mechanism revolved, setting the car into tingling vibrations which thrilled like electricity.

"Which is the clutch lever?" she asked.

"This," said the inventor, pointing. "I'm going back to the engine-room a minute; when I come back I'll show you how it works."

Mr. Shayne went off with Wiener, in animated conversation, leaving Virginia in the throbbing car. The rail had been removed, and a little push would have been quite sufficient to shove the girl and the machine overboard into the empty air. The thrill of the vibration, the sense of risk, or the intense gaze of Silberberg, made her feet fast. He had never seen her so charming. She laid her hand on the clutch-lever.

"I could move this lever a little," said she, "and fly away. I feel as if I should fly!"

"I shall not let you," said he. "I shall hold you!"

"Mr. Silberberg!"

The vibrator was excited by his putting his arm about her. One white jeweled hand was slipped around behind her, the other laid on her arm, the perfumed oily curls uncoiling until the red lips approached hers. Perfectly aware of what she was doing, but quite reckless of consequences, Virginia pushed the lever, threw in the clutch—and the wings started. The pull of the twisted mechanism, drawing him out to his fate, made Silberberg's very fingers tingle with terror; and he let go of girl and car and leaped backward. Under the lift of the wings the car dropped to the edge, slipped off with a grating sound, and swung there in mid-air, the painter dangling almost within reach, three hundred fathoms in the air, supported only by the spinning helices driven by an engine that one man only knew how to manage, and he as far removed from it, potentially, as if he had been on Mars!

The carnival that on the lips that had stimulated the aggression of Silberberg faded out. Virginia's mouth was set in a white line, and her face became deathly pale. Half rising, she stretched her hand toward the aeronaut, whence there came to her ears the cries of Silberberg and her uncle, and the wild profanity of Wiener.

"Listen to me!" he yelled. "Listen!"

He was trying to tell her how to use the levers, but she could not understand for the wild drumming in her ears. She felt stifled, her hand trembled as that she could not hold to anything, no matter how she tried. At last

—it was over in a moment—more by accident than design, she moved something. With appalling velocity the thing shot upward, the aeronaut left away toward the earth, the fisherman's house far beneath was whisked down to the likeness of a toy. The car struck her face, blowing downward more and more chill. Overhead the screws hummed implacably—the only sound she heard. She was in the midst of the terrible silence, now for the first time broken, save for the eagle's scream or the rustle of the wide wings of the osprey or the man-of-war hawk. Her heart felt as if gripped in an iron band, and thrashed smotheringly. She was drifting upward and drifting north toward the lagoon. If she could only descend in that landlocked water she might yet be saved—and she was not the girl to give up.

She studied the machinery, trying to apply her picked-up knowledge of engines. Here was the thing with which to stop it, she felt sure of that, but to stop it suddenly was more suicide, a swift fall to death. Some means there must be, she knew, to ease it down, but she saw nothing she dared touch. That was the horror of it—she dared touch nothing. She could only sit there awaiting whatever might befall, away up in the awful isolation of the sky with a demon machine that burned in ferocious energy and mounted upward.

She was growing calmer now. It would surely slow down of itself, she reasoned, and if it did not—well, she had escaped from Silberberg, anyhow. It was a clean, unstaffed place in which to meet the end. She would rather live, but—already nature's other which makes death easy was stealing into possession of her senses.

And then the north wind struck her. The puff smote her cheek, the helicopter yielded to it and swept southward like a feather before a fan. The lagoon moved from under her, pulling the Gulf stream. She was blowing out to sea. As the new thought added itself to her conception of the desperate situation, the sinking of her heart told her that until now she had not given up hope. She reached out to stop the engine, and as the vision passed through her mind of falling, falling like the stick of a rocket, being dashed to pieces on the earth, and trampled over by wild hogs until some one discovered her, she withdrew her trembling hand again, deliberately choosing a grave in the sea.

Then a voice from the chill solitude seemed to speak in her ear senseless words as of one

summering, like the phantoms of voices heard in the delirium of fever, finally growing distinct, and repeating over and over a command: "Retard the spark!" It said: "Retard the spark!"

The *Arc* was far below and to the north, now, the Gulf breakers boomed nearer and nearer, and still rang in her ears the ghostly command, "Retard the spark!" She tried to remember about engines—but this was so different! Suddenly she put her hand out, touched a little sliding thing, and paused, afraid to move it, yet quite confident it was the thing to move. If she fell now she would fall into the green water of the Gulf—that was a grim sort of comfort. She moved the sliding thing, and thought the base of the helices less strenuous. The ground—a landscape of almost pure white packed out with the dark green blotches of mossy and bushy spruce—seemed rising to her. The roar of the breakers swelled in her ears like the crescendo of some tremendous, up-rushing music, and she realized that she was falling in a great parabola that might carry her into the sea, or might dash her upon the driftwood and wreckage of the beach. By the breadth of a hair she advanced the spark, and the helicopter assumed a more level slant, toward the frothing water, and above the driftwood.

Suddenly the machine curved, and she thought she had struck, so she dashed broken on the ground—but. She had not seen Theodore Carson on that highest dune, but he had grasped the painter as it dragged over him, and it was he who had thrown it from its level swoop, though it jerked him down the dune, with Captain Harrod clinging to his legs, and dragged them almost to the water's edge. The car swung heavily, and finally, galled from it by its careening, they fell out of it a mass of red hair, crimson scarf, pigmy green, and silver bellids, the helicopter tore loose and fell out to sea before the gale, and this young man who did not care for visitors found himself burdened with one in the form of a rather good looking girl, as he could see even in the chaos of her hair-fall, who lay in the soft sand apparently unconscious, but in a dead faint—came to here thrust out of the sky.

II

A HOSPITABLE LANDING

THE helicopter commanded the attention of Captain Harrod and, with his bare toes

buried in the sand, he stood gazing after it as it rose as by some sort of negative gravity and, with its engine firing like a little gaiting, shot out to sea, whether it was now disappearing from the watcher's sight.

Theodore Carson, being young, ignored the machine. He stared for a moment in amazement at the prettiness girl, then took her tenderly in his arms, carrying her toward the hidden cabin. At the simplest spot Captain Harrod overtook him, but the young man paid no heed to offers of aid, wading steadily through the sand on to the shore, which the captain unlocked and opened and then stood aside for Carson and his retreating burden. He took her into the single large room, laid her on a clean-looking bed covered with a Navajo blanket, smoothed the white sheet down decorously, removed the long pen and laid aside the red hat, seeming scarcely to know what he was doing. There she lay like a dead bird, her plumage quite untroubled, for the white sand had shaken from her dress, and she looked unsoiled and pure, though hopelessly still.

"She is dead!" said Theodore, in a hushed voice.

"Oh, Ah reckon not!" replied the captain.

"You ort to do something! She's wounded!"

"What can I do?"

The captain approached, put his arms behind him, and looked, hat in hand. "Is her heart beatin'?" he inquired.

"I don't know!" cried Carson, twisting his fingers. "I don't know!"

"Ah reckon," said the captain, in an awed whisper, "that she wouldn't loom—seem! here things is—! you'd better an' see, Miss! Theodo!"

Carson laid his ear lightly to the white blouse. Some fluttering he seemed to feel, but he could not be certain. Harrod brought water in a water-frog-jug, which he seemed to have planned to use as upon a fly or rose.

"Do it best?" he asked.

"I can't tell," said Carson, "nor whether it's my pulse or hers that beats. Oh, I wish—What do they generally do, Captain?"

"They's some pain o' they look that has to be worse, ain't they?" inquired the captain anxiously.

"Captain," said Carson, the perspiration standing on his brow, "I'm going out on the gallery for air. You do what has to be done, Captain—or she may die!"

"Put some wash on that face, sah," said the captain, in judicious avoidance of ex-



"THE CAR SPUN HORRIBLY AND FINALLY THERE FELL OUT OF IT A HAZE OF RED HAT, CRIMSON SCARF, FUR-GOWN, AND SILKEN FALLAIS."

truce measures. "Ah don't reckon this hyn't be a case for 'flict of conscience'—noneed I'll crack that ha'tah's bottle."

Cannon pressed the wet towel to her face, the captain held a bottle labeled "Anemone" to her nostrils; she gasped, drew a quivering sigh, opened her eyes, and saw over her head a sleeping roof on which the mud-maps were plying their masonry, about her rude walls of rough boards, a rack of guns, some mechanical-looking instruments, a tall, rough-looking sailorlike man stuffing the cork in a bottle of pungent emanation, and a young face which would have been girlish had it not been for the little black mustache and the deep coat of tan. The older man was looking at her in a fatherly way, and the young one was sponging her forehead, his face near hers. She sat up suddenly, left her outflow, and looked about for her hat.

"You have had a fall, madam," said Cannon, "and are shaken up a little, but you are safe and among friends."

"Oh, thank you!" she said, in a tone of the most correct femininity. "It's over as kind of you, sir. I—I—I—oh, I thought I was lost! I thought I— Ohi! Ohi! Ohi! Ohi! O—oh!"

Suddenly from the pallid commonplace of speech she broke into hysterical screaming. Then she bowed her face in her hands as if to shut out some terrifying sight, and moaned and sobbed piteously, asking them to pardon her, promising to be calm presently, sometimes looking up for a moment with a smile forced through the horror stamped on her face by memory of the ordeal through which she had passed, and then breaking down into hysterical crying again. Captain Harrod passed a stiff glass of liquid from a bottle, diluted it, took it to the shuddering girl, and on meeting a forbidding glance and a shake of the head from Cannon drank it himself. Cannon then took hastily from a rolled toilet-case a white powder, which he offered to Virginia without a word. She looked into his eyes a moment, and swallowed obediently.

"And now," said Cannon, "we will leave you, if you will excuse us. Please feel at ease. You are quite safe, and the cabin is yours. We are in all ways at your service. The captain here is my friend, and we belong to a race that sees a dead in every helpless lady. I think you desire to sleep and will wake up refreshed, after which we shall place ourselves most definitely under your command."

She looked at him questioning. The soft-

ness of his voice, his little inconsistent lapses into dialect as he uttered the old-fashioned chivalric sentiments, won her trust.

"Ah'd lie down, ma'am," suggested the captain, "until that medicine gets a chance to work. Good-by, ma'am."

Virginia lay back and closed her eyes, but if the potion was an opiate it brought no dreams. Her face grew hot, and she knew her eyes would show, if she opened them, with a brilliance quite fascinating to the young man with the little black mustache. The fact that she thought of this startled her. Was she gazing flightily with fear? Why, this abnormal hilarity of spirits, in the exaltation of which all anxiety departed? She was unable to dwell long on the uncertainty and grief of her wait at being her, first into the sky, and then, supposedly, into the Gulf.

What difference did it make? The world grew unconsciously rosier with hope, more joyous because she could not tell why. The one insistent impulse of the moment was to burst forth into song—restrained with difficulty by dwelling on the bad form of such vocalization. She was sure, however, that she was about to do something shockingly unladylike. Perhaps it was the cause of the immense altitude the helicopter had reached. The room seemed silent as the waves that roared outside, but this struck her as extremely jolly. Really, it appeared selfish to enjoy this funny abstraction of the nervous system alone. Her old, old friends outside—the young man with the girl's face and his bowkinkered companion, the relation of both of whom to her past life seemed vague just now, though they were undoubtedly old and dear friends—she would hunt them up and talk with them. She rose, and walked unsteadily out upon the veranda, and saw Cannon and the captain sitting idly just beyond curtain of the cabin. Cannon came to her respectfully.

"I came out to thank you, sir," said Virginia lightly, "for your heroic behavior—heroic, sometimes, medical behavior? Don't my eyes look better?" She looked up into his face appealingly, her cheeks flushed, her pupils dilated.

"I beg of you not to mention it, madam," urged Cannon, with infinite solicitude. "But may I insist upon your allowing me to escort you back to your room?"

Virginia took his arm, leaning upon it with much of her not inconsiderable weight, and, as they passed across the veranda, with a mischievous expression in her face she whirled

him off into a few turns of a volte. Suddenly given, she then resumed the march into the cabin, exhibiting every sign of weakness in the knees. Carson was pale with anxiety at these symptoms, so at variance with those expected.

"Lovely dance," she said. "Lovely! So dear of you! I could walk forever—with you!"

"Thank you," said Carson gravely. "It would be an hour's beyond estimation."

"But just a little more, but only after a few minutes!" she queried coquettishly.

"Not in the least!" he exclaimed reassuringly. "Quite the contrary. And now, may I beg of you to lie down until you are quite restored?"

Virginia reclined upon the bed, feeling vaguely that she was doing extraordinary things, but quite sure that she did not care a jot.

"I feel sure," said Carson, looking down gravely, "that if you would compose yourself to sleep—"

"If some one would sit by me," said she, "I'm perfectly sure I should go to sleep. Sit by me and hold my hands."

"Just close your eyes," he replied, "and if you don't drop asleep, I'll—I'll—in present, I think I'd better read to you."

"So good of you!" said she. "Intellectual support! That looks like a sleepy book."

"It is," said Carson, taking up a great quarto volume. "Let me read on from where I stopped. 'In most dynamos—'"

"My head," said she, dragging it on the blanket. "It's cold!"

Carson took the hand a moment—and covered it with the blanket.

"That doesn't warm it much," said she. "I think you're funny!"

"In most dynamos," read the young man heavily, "the principle of reinduction is involved: that is, commencing with a very small amount of residual magnetism in the field magnets, the inductive action between them and the revolving armature results in the production of a feeble current—"

"Feeble magnetism," said the girl, opening her eyes and looking at him with sleepy reproach. "Quite so!"

"—a feeble current in the coils," read Theodore steadily. "The current may be made to pass through—'" And he plodded on and on, never lifting his eyes, making of compound-worded, semi-worded, and shrewd-worded dynamos said Captain Harrel, by toying in, heard Virginia fast asleep, and took

away the book. Carson, relieved at this respite from the problem of the sky-matches, darkened the windows and went out.

"Have you any game in the locker?" he asked.

"All them partridges ya' shot last night, sah," replied the captain.

The partridges were plump little bobwhites of the rosemary scrub, fat from feeding on the small oily yellow berries. The two men dined them in silence.

"She'll be shipshape when she wakes up," said the captain, at last.

"I hope and pray she may," replied Carson. "She was quite flighty. I'm much concerned for her. Officers sometimes have such unexpected afflictions."

Their cookery was an operation in progressive brook-making. Carson made broth of one partridge, peeped in to see if his guest was awake, served the broth to the captain, and made more. The man went to the west, the last bobwhite was cooked, the captain was providentially gaged with alternate courses of food and broth, when Virginia, very starchy and very reserved, opened the door and walked out upon the gallery. Carson shrank back into the kitchen and showed the captain into the breach.

"How do ya' do, ma'am?" he inquired solicitously. "Ah, she' hope ya' better' which ya' sleep?"

"Much better, thank you," she replied.

"We have some partridge broth, ma'am," he went on, "with rice, and a baked yam; and a plucked green trout from the lake back high, and some coffee. Sit down, ma'am, and Ah'll serve it."

"You are too good," said she, accepting the chair. "I shall be glad to take a little—Where is your—your friend?"

"He's somewhere about," replied the captain. "Ah really don't know, ma'am. Please take the coffee."

The coffee was black and strong, the broth was a temptation, and she sipped, with increasing appetite. Battered yam and the trout brought the meal to a triumphant end, with the world not such a chamber of wild horrors as it had seemed when she awakened. Yet where was she, and how should she depart? Where was the *Red*? Who were these men? The guests, the brow instruments that looked as if they pertained to navigation, the big windows—she!—all suggested things central, bold, and unknown. The kitchen and courtyard of the rough-looking house

reassured her as to her personal safety, yet, if they were smugglers or freebooters, how could they safely return her to the civilization of constabulary and constables? It was deliciously romantic;—but how creepy! There was a hush of them, and that pretty boy was too young to control their turbulence. The black-haired captain with the red neck—necessary to the color-scheme—would be less deferential than the gut-faced lieutenant with his meticulously proper attitude. Far less!

The black-haired captain was habitually "modulated with drink" and always resorted to the pretty girl-captain, "Come 'ere, my pretty, *and give us a drink!*" Silly! but it made her fluster to imagine the motley sea-women with blunderbusses at the right shoulder stiff filing toward the cabin. The lieutenant must arrange her departure at once! In the midst of her panic she recalled vaguely the influence of the medicine, her walk with the lieutenant, the holding of her hand, and the drum-sound dynamics. Were these things true, or fragments of a wild dream? Now if there be added to visions of leaving pirate-captains a hot and cold and shivery feeling arising from the conviction that one has done something horrid, Virginia's impulse to see the young robber and end the idyl forever may be accounted for. She turned to Captain Harrod with an expression so agitated that he was somewhat startled.

"I wish you would say to the lieutenant," said she, "that I must see him at once."

The fisherman analyzed this speech for perhaps a minute, in absolute silence, then he said, "Yes, *my lady*," and instantly produced Carson, who, so far as Virginia could judge, had been within the captain's sight when she was assured that his whereabouts were unknown. This was delicious and covert-looking! She must fly this lovely shore!

"You are, no doubt," said the young man, "wondering where your companions are, and thinking it strange that they have not returned."

"It is strange," said she, "Something must have happened to the engines."

"No," said Theodore, "not that. They all but blew out to sea—They simply had to fight their way off toward Pensacola, where they must have made harbor."

"And so—they went—and left me!"

"They couldn't help it," urged Carson.

"It shows the sort of man Silberberg is!" she cried hotly, "and——"

"Quite so," asserted Carson. "And yet,

in the present state of the art, the nearest will not allow you to do quite as you would, especially on a lee shore off a thousand miles of open sea, you know, with a good deal more than a capital of wind. They really could not be expected——"

Virginia glanced him with a gesture in which disdain was mingled with emphatic dismissal of the subject. "And now," said she, "perhaps you will be so good as to help me to some conveyance to Mobile?"

"I have a boat on the pier," said Carson, "half a mile inland. There is a channel to Palmetto Beach. The boat and crew are at your service."

"I should prefer to walk, if you please," said she.

"Unless you have a day or two to spend in the journey, I should not recommend the attempt."

"I know some people," said she, "at the Yapon Lodge Inn at Palmetto Beach. Can you——?"

"If we go at once," he replied, "you may be there for dinner."

"I am ready," said she, doing "Let us go, please, immediately."

There were few preparations to make. Captain Harrod led the way easily along shore to a spot where the scrub grass well down toward the lesser beach. A long, square barge (rather her hull coated and sunk in the sand, and on this, like persons striving to conceal their trail, they walked back between clumps of dark-green coccineary, then over a low place in the dunes, down to the dry, hard bottom of a former pool under a thicket of scrub-oaks so dense that the *Rev* or any of her tribe might have scanned for them in vain, among black ponds fringed with very bent grass, just ghostly clumps of tall pines, and, finally, passing through a dense tangle of persimmons, palmettos, thorny "hark-and-be-damned," and low-growing reds, they emerged upon a little north-looking hillock covered with magnolias, cedars, hickories, and live-oaks, and looked upon a strange turn of rocky water, edging southerly in the north wind, its black waves crested with foam like white phantas on funeral crepe. The shores of this sinister lake were densely wooded by sullen ranks of pines and cypresses standing like somber-faced soldiers knee-deep in swamp. Virginia glanced at sight of the somber shore—it seemed such an evil spot in which to be cast away with these strange men who lived so

behind closed doors and walked the sands so as to leave no footprints. Surely, her worst nightmare—

"Haul out the launch, Captain!"

Why was the trim, speedy-looking launch so completely hidden in the tall grass? The gullweed paddling in the sand made sounds like prowling accomplices. Virginia was wondering to be off as Carson went aboard and inspected the engine with the air of an expert.

"And now, ladies," said he, "if you will do me the honor to step aboard——"

She turned to the captain, who held the painter, one bare foot in the water, the other planted heavily among the sharp shells on shore. "I want to thank you," said she, offering him her hand, "for your delicious cookery—and all your kindness to me."

"Ye' kindly welcome," returned the captain, bowing over her hand. "It's been a pleasure an' a privilege to cater fo', ma'am, but the cookin' wasn't mine, ma'am."

"It was delicious, wherever it was," she said, throwing a little smile at Carson.

"I'm sorry," resumed the captain, "about that 'ere medicine. If it seemed a little too strong——"

Miss Sauer, remembering the waltz, swept laughingly to her place in the boat. Carson, with his eyes steadily fixed on his engine, shoved off.

"Evenin' to yeh," said the captain, still with one foot in the water like a heron.

"Good evening," responded the young man.

Virginia said nothing. Carson, stealing a look at her, saw the flush dying out of her face and a smile taking its place, a dimpling, spasmodic smile, accompanied by little quick flickers of the nostrils, as if she were desirous of indulging in a laugh, but saw no visible means for so doing. She waved her handkerchief at the captain.

"Do you see," said Carson, pointing to the wedding shore, "that the little hill at the landing is just a mass of shells?"

"Why, so it is, I believe!" she exclaimed. "How come so many there?"

"It's a prehistoric kitchen-sink," said this most extraordinary young pilot. "So many people lived there that they literally made a hill of the shells of the mollusks they ate."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Virginia, and after a long pause she added, "How red!" Monthly her sentence was, "How odd that

this young captain should know about archaeology—or is it paleontology?"

It was easy to study him, he looked so religiously away from her. He was rather interesting. If she really had said things to him, and walked with him, what a dreadful thing it was! But how much more fine and chivalrous he had been in view of her own behavior! Of course, if he was a criminal one owed a duty to society; but ought she to allow him to enter the radius of action of the authorities? He must be more aimed against by society than sinning, his profile was so perfect—and how fine and soft his eyeside looked! How different from Silberberg he was in every way—especially in his attitude toward girls! Society be plagued! She would be perfectly silent as to the calm in the dunes, and she would cover, never give evidence against these people. She would decline to know their names and refuse to testify. There! She was in a fine flash of defiance as she heard Carson finishing some further observation about the shell-mounds.

"Down along the lagoon," he said, "the shells are those of oysters—prehistoric like these. At Strong's Bayou they are twenty feet deep. What kind of misadventure?"

"Tremendous hoos," assented Virginia, who had just defied the coasts, "to be that deep!"

"I mean the wreckage," he explained.

"To be sure!" she speculated. "What dreadfully deep creatures they are! One learns that from Cooper."

"But back where we started," he went on, hoping for a purposeful adjustment of her ideas to his, "back where we started, they were clean."

"The—the people?" she inquired hesitantly, "or—or what?"

"I was referring to the shell-fish," said he with a little diffidence, arising from doubt as to whether the night had been making game of him, "but in the hole sea it is hard to talk correctly and manage the launch."

"That isn't it at all," she replied. "Your class wasn't paying the slightest attention. Pardon me."

He threw over the tiller to round into a little muddy cove, but instead of running ashore entered a narrow creek, which he followed through such amazing tortuosities that the sun, low in the west, was now on the right, now on the left, sometimes astern, and again dead ahead. An indolent current flowed with their course, its water ruddy like wine, and

beautifully placid save where touched by the dying wind. Tangled reeds cut off the horizon, and at no time was anything to be seen but the reeds, the water, the aquatic birds that flew off like figures from a Japanese screen, the silent little launch, and the young and interesting outlaw with whom she seemed to have entered into a new world, consisting of a labyrinth as complex as that of Cretæ, and from which, so far as she could see, there was no escape.

The reeds beside the bay stream shimmered with the motion of scampering fish, and when they entered the still ponds, waving on the bay waterway like heads on a cord, the glossy surface would suddenly bulge up into swift, shining scrolls, as the fancy giants took flight. How beautiful it was, she thought—the perfection of manly loveliness!

"I'm having," said she, "a perfectly delightful time!"

"I am very, very glad," said he.

Lily pads now rose and fell in the waken of fish and boat—great green disks with no north in their sides for the stem, but only a slit, as if nature had used a pair of scissors and made but one slip of it. Negotiating a passage so narrow that the strokes of the launch safely scraped both rocky shores, they emerged into a lakelike not much larger than a good sized theater, which was quite green with the floating leaves, like a rich, fat meadow. And over there were rose, red, three, a dozen flowers—vasey, creamy, pure, and scintillarily beautiful.

"Oh!" cried Virginia. "How exquisite!"

Cannon crossed about and pitifully robbed the pond of every blossom. "They are smaller than the Northern lilies," said he, "and they have little fragrances, but I love them all the better."

"They are daintier," she said, "and not so pronounced."

"Like the Southern girls," said he.

"I'm a Southern girl," said she, "if I am a Northern tourist."

"I know that," he replied. "I had that in mind."

This talk was verging upon the personal, and therefore to be discouraged. How keenly observing he must be to detect in her commonplace English the old Alabama accent! She supposed herself to be quite rid of it, her own occasional and ignorant lapses into what some of her less educated friends called quite like dialect to her. He was so more and more interesting. Surely, surely, with his love of flowers

and his ethereal delicacy, he was not so very much worse, at heart, than some people in other walks of life. She was quite recovered from her alarm, quite in control of the situation, now, snuggling bewitchingly down and looking at her lilies as the boat emerged from the narrow and shot out into the lagoon, the blue waves of which had subsided into round, rolling short swells.

"Good-by!" cried Virginia, looking back at the enchanted marsh. "Good-by! This is the world again."

Cannon was looking the other way with less persistence now. There was something mysterious in the charm of this girl's manner. His good-by to the narrow seemed a subtle suggestion to him. They were out in the world, and therefore she let him come close. The lights of the hutch and villas along the north shore swept by them in a panorama of busy illuminations. A great towboat slowly pushed its five acres of barges toward Mobile from the Perdido Bay inner passage. The lagoon was filled with launches. The evening had so far grown quiet that the air-ships had come out, sweeping the skies like enormous phosphorescent insects. From a hundred yards overhead fell the twanging of a harp and the voice of a tenor in full song. Virginia, whose glance at her robber had been unobtrusive recently, because more likely to meet him, could safely look at him again, absorbed as he was in the management of his craft. He stood up once, like and graceful as a leopard, and, after a scrutiny of an approaching sloop, shivered off, saying that there was better water to port. He was evading detection, she thought, and she felt compassionately furious and guilty.

"We have been very impersonal," said he. "May I introduce myself? My name is——"

"Oh, please don't!" she exclaimed. "Forgive me, but I'd rather not know."

"It is not interesting," said he, with a slow smile, "not to know. I shall always think of you as——"

"As the girl from Mars," she suggested. "I came tumbling down to you in a scap out of the sky."

"Husky from Mars," he demurred. "More properly from Venus."

"I don't like that very well," she protested.

"There's Andromeda," he suggested.

"Too tragic," she said, "and too far off."

"Then the Pleiades are disappointed," he went on.

"Quite so," she asserted. "There's only one of me, and——"

"And there will never be another," he rejoined.

No answer to this little gush seemed either demanded or available. So Virginia merely shook her head. "I struck like a comet," said she, "but they all have numbers, don't they? or those funny little cyaniform symbols?"

"Isn't there an asteroid named Psyche?" he inquired. "I'm going to assume that there is, and name you after that."

"A purely telescopic star——"

"Because of its distance only, Psyche?"

"A little body whirled about among the great ones, because it can't help it. I believe——"

"And one that I shall not have the satisfaction, unless it sends me word, of knowing whether it actually exists or not," said he meaningly.

"And, of course," she said, "Psyche will have neither the means nor the inclination to enter into communication with——with anyone on this mundane globe. What chance is this?"

Carson was mute, rebuffed, silenced. She repeated quite blandly her inquiry about the shore, into which they seemed about to dash headlong.

"It's where we enter the canal," said he, rather sadly; "the eastern inner passage, you know."

"There's something I want to say to you," said she, as they approached the entrance. "Do you feel quite free to visit the hotels with their lights, their crowds, and——isn't there any danger?"

Carson sat in silence while he stared into the canal, as if stupidly at a loss to guess her meaning. "If you would prefer," said he, as if at last he had the clue, "not to be seen with——"

"Oh, no!" she cried. "How can you be so cruel! I meant——oh, you are cruel!" Her protest rang back from the rows of dark magnolia water which he was guiding the launch—a protest of perfect and pained sincerity.

"I beg your pardon, Psyche," said he. "I did not understand. We will go on to the beach."

"Thank you," said the girl. "I thought only of your safety."

"Ah!" he said. "It's quite too late for that."

"If anything happens to you," said she. "I

shall never forgive myself. Listen, my dear friend. I think that no girl was ever so beautifully treated. You and the captain have been perfect——absolutely perfect. I—I can't tell you what the beautiful things were, and I know that neither of you will ever know. That's what makes it so fine. If you were a girl, and had loved for years where I have lived, you'd know, though, and you'd thrill with admiration for the men who are——are immense enough to act so. Thank!"

The boat silently passed in across the woven threads of light that webbed the water from a thousand points about Strong's keypost, and gently came to the dock of the Yapon Hodge line. The promenades were crowded with people in evening clothes and waiters with trays. It was a gay scene, and Carson felt the pull of it as they stopped ashore.

"Can I do anything more for you?" he asked.

"No, you must go now. But thank you a thousand times!" said she. "I'm just a little nobody, or I'd say to you that if ever you need a friend——"

"Your mentioning it will be joy enough for me," said he.

She put out her hand, walking up close and looking into his face gratefully. She was astonished to see how white and set his features were; he was thrilled to feel that her hand trembled in his, and reached up, not the molecule that flicked her eyes as she poured forth her few words of gratitude.

"You are agitated!" said she. "You are in danger! Go with my best wishes for your escape and safe return to your company!"

"Psyche," said he fervently, "your good-will and your anxiety make me happy, but I fear it is too late. I shall never escape, Psyche, from the web you have lured me into, never!"

She looked about for the something form of the officer she feared, but she saw no one except tourists in nautical and aeronautical toggery, coming down the wharf. She was in an agony of terror for him. He pressed her hands, convulsively, she returning the pressure, and begging him again to go. He carried her hands to his lips, kissed them passionately and leaped into the boat. Virginia watched him anxiously as he darted away like a frightened mouse—not toward his cabin in the dunes, but out through the entrance of the harbor and all across the bay toward Point Clear. One more mystery to ponder over when thinking of her mysterious mailfactor!

The next installment of "*Virgins of the Air-Lanes*" will appear in the May issue.



THEN HE ABRUPTLY TURNED FROM HER, STOPPED UPON THE RAIL AND DROPPED OFF INTO THAT BLACK ABYSS OF NIGHT AND TERROR

(Continued on the next page.)

Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Leigh

RESCUES OF FLYING DEPENDANTS.—Virginia Soares is the guest of her uncle, Finky Skyles, on his great air-ship, the *Fin*, which is hovering over the coast of Alabama. Others on board are Miss Silberberg, the wealthy head of the Federated Mink Concern, and an eccentric named Wang. A trial of Wang's new helicopter—a type of small flying-machine—is to be made. The attention of Silberberg, which, encouraged by Miss Skyles, he directs upon Virginia, has been attracted to the girl. In a spirit of fun she seats herself in the rear of the helicopter, and accidentally reaching a lever finds herself adrift in space. After a thrilling flight through the air, the helicopter descends close to the edge of the water, the landing pointer is seized by two men, and Virginia tumbles out upon the sand. Her rescuers prove to be Theodore Carson, a young Southerner, who is at work on a new idea in flying machines, and Captain Harrell, a typical Gulf Islander. After the girl has recovered from her shock, Carson takes her to a boat in Palmetto Beach, a town-by-reason. Virginia believes the two men to be surprising characters and will not tell her name, when—upon Carson's return he will call her Popple.

CARSON'S LANDING



IT had always been a point of genealogical dispute as to whether or not Theodore Carson's father was of kin to the founder of the old Carson place up Fish River. It was one of those controversies in which one side was supposed to be trying to climb, the other obnoxious of

the climbing, and both in a position of peculiar delicacy from the fact that they were all Americans and disbelievers in anything like inherited rank.

General Carson, in his later years, used to sell turpentine to his namesake at the dingy ship-chandler's store on the wharf near the Eads Street water-clock. On these commercial occasions, when mollified by juleps, the general used to call the ship-chandler "cousin." At other times, however, he made no bones of his opinion that the Mobile Carsons were damned common people, and handled as impudent any fool claims of kinship between the humble tradesman and the Carsons of Marengo County. The ship-chandler, though too proud to make any claim, privately believed in the kinship theory. When the general died, having lost his Marengo estates in tryings-to-breed-the-one-fifty-trotter, it was discovered that he owed the ship-chandler on mortgage more than the value of the Fish River plantation, which

passed to the rejected branch of the Carsons, and Theodore's father, delighted to have come into what he felt to be his own, sold his house through the cut-over waste-land for a delightful best restaurant, and, accepting the obligation to bring back the glories of the family, embarked so unreservedly and unselfishly upon the development of a cotton-plantation according to the general's plans that Theodore fell heir to nothing but his waste of second-growth pine, actively self-sustaining, and a policy of life insurance, which he invested in such education as he most doubted—a combination of electrical engineering and mechanics. He was a little better sometimes as he recalled the phantoms the pursuit of which had ruined two successive owners of the estate—the general's breeding mania and his father's curious pride in a mere name. Whenever he gave chase to a phantom of his own—with what success we shall see—and followed what his friends called a rainbow with such true Carson enthusiasm that when he left Virginia Soares on the dock at Strong's Bayou, on that sandy, deliciously dreamy southern shore of Mobile Bay, he moved through the night for a house very nearly dismantled, on an estate growing up to persimmon-thicket, dew-berry-bush, and palmetto-shades, the very title to which was about to pass to his creditors. His young father was in the cabin back among the dunes, but calmer that near the prosaic story of his fortunes could account for his alternate joy and gloom as he

lured north in the night. The girl who came from on high was the thing that really mattered.

A gray dawn was broadening into day when he arrived at his own landing, and the chill was such as to make a wonderer long for warm blankets and a whip of flame in the grate, but Theodore sat on the wharf thinking, though his bed was within five minutes' walk. Who was the young woman who had so strangely fallen from the sky at his feet? Why had she refused to learn his name, and concealed her own? Whose airship was it from which she had been just neared? And who was the girl?

He wondered whether her people knew of the chance by which he and Captain Harrod had rescued the fair canopy. Probably they believed her lost. The helicopter had merely paused when relieved of its burden, then had shot out over the Gulf like a flying gull. They must measure the girl as lost. Doubtless they were filling the air with wireless messages from Pansuola, calling upon vessels to look out for a runaway helicopter carrying a young girl to her death in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, somewhere off at the limit of the flying-machine's radius of action. As in formal duty bound, they would, no doubt, soon return to the place where they had seen her last and make hopeless search. They would be likely to be seen of Captain Harrod, and to see him. Theodore, trusting the old fisherman to preserve the secret of the hidden cabin, dismissed the matter from his mind and went into the house, where an old colored woman was chaffing heartily about, but assumed an antlike activity at his demand for breakfast.

The *Roe*, according to Theodore's forecast, came clanking back in the same tardy dawn that jumped that young dreamer to his home. Mr. Silberberg lighted and smoked countless cigarettes. Mr. Shayne nervously walked the deck and debated the question of letting Mrs. Shayne know of her niece's tragic death at once, or waiting for a personal interview. For the *Roe* had had no word of either the helicopter or the girl, and they are no place of hope for her. She was a dependent, and something of a problem to Mrs. Shayne. Any ordinary circumstance that would have separated the aunt and niece would not have been regretted inwardly by either of them—in fact Mrs. Shayne had expressed to her husband some

wonder as to what Silberberg saw in the girl, but to lose her like this, with all the publicity of the terrible affair—

"Maria will never get over it!" said Shayne. "What the devil else that fellow aft?"

The fellow aft was Wiener, who was discussing to the crew in pure asserted malice, which he heaped on all concerned in the loss of his machine. This so got upon Mr. Shayne's nerves that he went aft, gave Wiener a check for what he asked, and informed him that unless he kept still they would descend and put him off the aeronaut.

They crossed Perido Bay, passed the swamps and cranfish meadows, and cruised about aimlessly till dawn. The light found them far down toward the lagoon, flying high for safety in the darkness. The long, straight beach lay white and cold looking and solitary in the pure light, which touched the great gas-holder to silver while the earth and sea were still in gloom. From the wireless overhead could be heard the discharges by which the operator was making a last despairing effort to obtain news of the lost girl.

"It's not far from here," said Silberberg.

"Oh, we haven't come nearly far enough," replied Shayne. "We began gasping the helicopter for the test between Three Rivers and Callian's Bayon. That's miles west."

"But we were coming east," urged Silberberg, "and it took some time."

The banner from the engine-room was sprung with a sharp rattle. Mr. Shayne went to the speaking-tube.

"We all think, sir," said the engineer, "that we've about reached the place where the young lady went out to sea."

"Mr. Silberberg thinks so, too," replied Shayne; "but I think it was west of here."

"There's a man on the beach, sir," said the engineer. "Shall we speak him?"

"Do," replied Shayne. "He may know something."

The *Roe* dived about like an alighting swan, all the time descending. Finally she passed above the man, and in the part of the leveling screen Mr. Shayne spoke. Had he seen anything of a flying-machine which went out to sea yesterday? Yes, he had.

"It was right close by, sir," said Captain Harrod.

"Did you see the young lady?" asked Shayne.

"Yes, sir."

"Was she still clinging to the helicopter when you saw her?"

"No, sah, she wasn't clingin' to nothin'—with the han' to'nin me—when Ah lost sight on hah, sah."

"Let down the lift," commanded Mr. Shayne. "I'm going down."

The three men—Shayne, Silberberg, and Winner—gathered about the fishermen.

"Do you think," queried Silberberg, "that there is the slightest chance for her to be saved, my good man?"

"Was the helicopter going when you last saw it?" interrogated Winner. "Or did it fall?"

"Ah think the lady has a chance to make go'n," replied Harrod calmly. "An' as fr the chikannany diagan she come byah in, the last Ah seen of it, it were poppin' to'nin the scupper-bucks right past."

"It," repeated Shayne. "It" was going? Where was she? Tell us all you know."

"Ah'm a right ign'ant man, an' don't know much," replied the captain, "but Ah'm slow spoken, an' it would take a half-hour to tell all Ah knows—go'nly speakin'! But if it's just about the young lady, she rambled out on the sand, in fair shape, an' if she's made good weather she's about be'n in the boat fr' Mobile. We was right proud to hev hah as on' guest."

"There!" shouted Winner triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you that machine would stand grid? Struck the ground——"

"Keep out of this!" commanded Mr. Shayne. "Was she hurt seriously?"

"But I say, Mr. Shayne," protested Winner, "don't you see that with my machine you've got the business coopered? Put your money on the helicopter, and you'll——"

"Ah yo' Mr. Shayne?" inquired the captain.

"Yes, yes," replied Shayne. "What have you done with her?"

"A gentleman Ah'm employed by," replied the captain, "has done carried hah over to the sho. Ance' yo' pardons, ah yo' the Mr. Shayne that's called the 'Trust of the Power' o' the Ash?"

"I reckon I see," replied Mr. Shayne. "But tell us of the rescue of this dear girl. Tell us!"

While Silberberg and Shayne listened Winner began scolding up and down the beach. Guided by an instinct for mischief, he went west, and as the captain's story rambled on he scrutinized the sands for traces of his beloved machine. Harrod

moved unasily as Winner passed at the spot where the helicopter struck, examined the tracks, and passed through the dunes toward the cove. Yet he finished his tale unharmed, and placed the whole story truthfully in their possession. At once they signaled the Palmerton Beach wireless station, and in a moment the news came that Miss Suarez had sent messages to Mrs. Shayne that morning, and had taken an early boat for Mobile. Mr. Shayne grasped the hand of Mr. Silberberg, who sat on a log, burying his face in his handkerchief.

"I know how you feel, old fellow," said Shayne. "And I want to say to you, my good man—I can't repay you, you know, but as far as money can go, I hope you will ask, or rather accept——"

"Ah couldn't accept anything, sah," said the captain, "thank 'ee kindly. But maybe Ah ask what yo'-all's gain' now?"

"Straight to Mobile," replied Mr. Shayne. "Why?"

"Ah understand," went on the captain, "that yo' ah interested in all sorts o' flyin' craft—air-ships an' dyin'-dragons lobb what the young lady come in, an'——"

"Well," answered Mr. Shayne, laughing, "not in that sort any more, I reckon, but I'm supposed to control in aeronautics—if that's what you mean. Got a machine that solves the problem? Most everyone has."

"No, sah," replied the captain, "but a friend o' mine right on yo' way Ah'd pow'ful well like to hev yo' stop by an' see. He's got something if he could put yo' attention to a minute, it might—— It's Mr. Theodo', my employah."

"The gentleman who took my niece to the beach?"

"Yes, sah."

"We are in a hurry," urged Mr. Shayne; "starting for Chicago. Won't some other time do?"

"It's right on yo' way, sah," persisted the captain, "an' it's the dove! Ah'll ask of yo'-all. Ah leave it to yo', sah, of co'se, but——"

"Will you go and pick us to the place?"

"Ah can't say well leave byah, sah," replied the captain; "but if yo' piker knows these piny woods as well as he acts do, sah——"

"Come and tell him the place," said Shayne impulsively. "That the hars for Winner up there. Yes, yes, don't say any more. We'll go. But I tell you, my friend, your

man might have spent a lot of car-fare reaching Finley Shayne."

"Ah reckon that's so, sah," replied the captain, stepping into the lift. "He's been a-standin' 'er' w'y heavy about the matter, sah, fo' a long time."

In that era of the changing world, dwellers in this land of sun and dream—half coastal seaport, half touring pleasure-resort—were much belated to the sight of the aerial craft then affected by the wealthy. The layette long ago had shown the attractiveness of any new mode of ambulation. The automobile following had become the favorite extravagance of the rich. Vulgarized by commerce and trade, the motor-car was in turn abandoned by Dives, who now, still devoid of Lazzarus, rose above the thronged roads in the great aeromats of the day. The discovery of the methanose mixture, with ten times the explosive force of gasoline, had made ascensional and depressive screws an efficient adjunct of the aeromat with its heavily buoyant gas-bag, and with the improved propellers of 1911 the old-fashioned "dirigible" became a fairly dependable craft in ordinary weather. It was along this line, rather than by way of the heavier-than-air aeromach, that development had marched—to the enormous enrichment of Finley Shayne, who controlled the Korean methanose market. Even after the discovery of the Alaskan methanose fields and the loss of this monopoly, his hold on the industry by patents and secret processes could not be shaken off. He was still the "Prince of the Future of the Air", and it was of him that Theodore Carson thought as he sat on the colored gallery of his house, watching the far-off aerial monsters that were in sight.

His barren estate lay under the line between Pensacola and Mobile, and above this ran the sparser drift from Atlantic and Appalachian Forest points to the Mississippi Sound resorts. He knew the type of every air-ship. Most of these huge objects dropping into the aerial harbor at Mobile were Cauders, of which the *Roc* was the type. The smaller, quicker, less-flying ones without the gas balloon were the still unaccepted aeromats. The screw was turned by an ascensional airship with flapping wings, or by helicopters, on each of which Carson looked longingly, wishing it might bring upon the treasure brought by that fugacious machine the day before. The problem of life was in

three various vessels, and he studied them watchfully, so watchfully that the *Roc's* wild bark sounded three before he heard it. Then he stepped out upon the Bermuda grass, saw a straddle telephone spinning down from the great silver orb balanced in the calm sky, caught it, and put it to his ear.

"Oh, Aunt Chloe!" cried he, running in for his hat and coat. "Here's a party up above the house asking for me, and who do you suppose it is?"

"Must be the angel Gab'el," replied Chloe, "I'm wiah he is an' do wiah he blow dat be's, bet Ah reckon it's jus' some trikin' sky-bosom. Who is dey?"

"The greatest luck you ever heard of!" cried Theodore. "Where's that new parachute? Never mind; I've found it." And with no further explanation he ran out, stepped into the lift, and was whisked up to the *Roc's* polished deck with his new parachute over his shoulder.

Mr. Shayne met him with something less than the starchy coldness with which he was wont to treat the man representing an undeveloped business opportunity, and with much less than the degree of warmth with which, had it not been for the business opportunity, he would have greeted the master of his store.

"I am under great obligations to you, Mr. Theodore," said he, "for your service to my niece. To be entirely frank, I should not have appropriated the time to call, on any business account merely."

Carson felt repelled. He traced the "Mr. Theodore" to Captain Harrod's mode of referring to him. Feeling nothing in Mr. Shayne's air evincing threat for data concerning himself, he offered none as to his name.

"I am sorry," said he, "that you have gone even an inch out of your way on account of any flimsy obligation. I prefer the basis of business."

"By Jove," said a voice at his elbow, "you ought to be able to meet him on that basis, Shayne."

Carson's ears were affronted, his nerves tortured, by the voice; and he felt a sudden disinclination to meet its owner. Shayne waved the man away smilingly.

"But," went on Sillenberg, "it seems to me, old chap, we'd vastly better put the whole thing on a basis of breakfast, first. Send this good man sit, and let's fall to."

Carson wheeled and stared Sillenberg in the face curiously with the impersonal dis-

favor of one studying the picture of some obnoxious thing like a Gila monster or a host of vultures. He made no effort to avoid affront, but leaned into Silberberg's visage with his eyes until that gentleman began to squirm; whereupon Carson turned his back suddenly on the head of the Match Trust, and faced Mr. Shayne just in time to detect a fleeting blush in the act of departing from his countenance.

"I trust that you will take breakfast with us," said Shayne. "We shall——"

"Thanks," said Theodore. "I have breakfasted." He turned and walked back to the engine-room, saying that he would look the craft over and see Mr. Shayne after breakfast.

The ship passed Magnolia Springs, left Point Clear far to port, sailed majestically over Fairhope, and was halfway across the bay before the meal ended. As Shayne and Silberberg rose they faced Winner, standing behind them, hat in hand.

"Well!" said Shayne.

"I just wanted to say," said Winner, "that I know what this young Carson's proposition is."

"So do we," said Shayne. "It's some kind of flying-machine."

"Yes," said Winner. "And if you don't find him reasonable to deal with, come to me. I've seen his model. It isn't patented, of course, and I can build one like it in a few weeks—with money enough. I'll learn him to hush in and take a customer from me."

Silberberg and Shayne looked significantly at each other.

"When investors fall out——" began Shayne.

"Monopolists get their hooks in," suggested Silberberg. "Let's take the fool north, and see what he's got."

"Most sensible thing you've said," replied Shayne.

Now this conversation must not be taken as proof that Mr. Shayne had decided upon any unfair treatment of the cocky chap who walked the *Ken's* deck like a young bull in his own proper pasture. His services to Virginia entitled him to fair treatment in business, or to fair payment in money. They might not entitle him to both. In matters astronomical, business was business. If Winner could learn Carson's secrets, it would do nobody harm for Shayne to know them. All these things were business tri-

ling. So he talked with Winner aside, and by the time the astronomer gently perched into her berth in the sternal harbor he had discovered that Winner really knew nothing, but was in a position, as he said, to find out a dozen of a lot—having seen in the shed among the dunes, he intimated, a mysterious something which he declined to describe, principally, as Shayne plainly told him, because he couldn't; but it might be worth his while, Shayne added, to take another look and make a sketch or so.

Carson waited in glum silence until the second descent of the lift, refusing to occupy it along with Silberberg. Shayne urged him to stay aboard for the night up to Chicago. It was only one day there and another back; for the weather-map indicated northerly winds outward and southerly ones returning—one of those fine, prosperous flights that sometimes give to the ascent the semblance of real riding of the air.

"The weather won't," said Shayne, "in the mildest known for March. We've plenty of furs and top-coats if it falls cold. We can discuss your project, Mr. Theodore, going up. Come with us."

Very well, said Mr. Theodore, he would go—with many thanks. He wandered about the maze and Silberberg; but he asked no questions. His fervent wish that "Psyche" would go was born of a natural desire to know if she had recovered from her terrible experience. He pursued so strongly to pay her the merely formal attention of inquiring about this that he wandered about aimlessly, growing cold and tingling to his fingers' ends at imaginary passages between himself and her, raising the dangers from moving trains and motor vehicles, and walking slap aboard a Compaquist beam, under the impression that he was strolling up Government Street. With unceremonious haste he got off, or his next land-fall would have been the canal zone, not Chicago.

He cleared his eyes of Psyche-dust, strode directly to the lift, and went aboard the *Ken*. It was late in the afternoon. The engineer was impatient for his party, and wore an uncharacteristic cough of relief as they appeared below. Carson looked down and saw a rising oval spot of black-and-white checks, which he knew to be the hat cap of Silberberg, and he breathed hard. Also, however, there was a portion of millinery under which must be at least two women, and he breathed easier. That bound was going,

then. And Psyche, too. How inexpensively amusing and completely enthralling it would! They went forward, and when Carson followed, the ladies had vanished into the cabin with Silberberg.

"What do you think of the weather?" asked Shayne.

"The law has reached Omaha," replied Carson, "and has departed rapidly. We ought to get into stiff north winds soon, increasing all the way."

"Let 'em increase," rejoined Shayne. "We'll make port quicker. If it should be northerly weather now——"

"We'll have to make?" queried Carson.

"Naturally."

"What I'm going to talk to you about," said Carson, "is a machine that could make Chicago against the fiercest gale quicker than the flying-palace can do it tonight."

"Oh, yes," lightly replied Shayne. "I've had 'em advised me that would do it in an hour—in the inventor's mind. And they've been amusing them ever since the time of Simon Darcourt—and we are still about where the Brazilian left the art. Mechanisms and light engines help some, but we're helpless yet in a forty-mile wind."

"We may be so to night," said a voice at their elbow. "The forecast is mist and clouds north of Meridian, and it's blowing hard at Memphis, too."

"How hard?"

"Thirty-two psi," replied the engineer; "but it's freshening every minute, they say."

"It'll be with us," answered Shayne.

"Put her tail to it, and hike!"

The earth was a mammoth cup with the setting sun a flaming wick on its rim. To the north was a huge black accumulation of clouds which seemed to swell with startling rapidity; but the weather-wise visitors knew it to be their own headlong flight which brought the clouds nearer with such speed and mimicked the swift approach of a storm. The silence was absolute, save for the muffled exhaust of the engines and the purr of the driving-arms astern, for the *Rae* kept pace with the blast, and the light breeze that swept her decks was from prow asternward to stern, as she edged up into the great cyclonic whirl and outwitted the wind. Darkness stole over the earth, and the landscape was blotted out, even while the sun's rays still silvered the great bulging overhang of the *Rae's* majestic hull. The light drew up to the north and left the ship, too, in shadow.

The running-lamps threw long white cones down thousands of feet to the north, and these, shifting back and forth, looked like the lumbering legs of some unwarily monster awkwardly stumbling in an attempt to walk. Far off above the lights of clear-streams—Fleeting-like constellations of massed stars. The arc-lights of the towers shone up vividly as the flying ship moved the lighted areas, and then winked out, like scuffed candles, as she crossed the shadows of their reflection. Carson, for a moment left alone, walked aft. Looking rather concerned, the engineer was turning his ear downward, listening to the sullen roar that droned up from the ground.

"A devil of a wind," said he to Carson. "Hear it howl—and not a leaf stirring up here."

"Yes," asserted Carson, listening. "It is blowing, but what of it?"

"Oh, nothing," replied the engineer, looking at the manometer, "only, did you ever try to bring one of these gas-bags to its gale? Not to mention running her into the local Chicago garage? Hay?"

"No," answered Carson. "It must be difficult."

"Oh, it isn't bad," returned the engineer. "In a twenty-mile wind it's just an even break, that's all, whether you punch a hole in her and drop two hundred feet to the street, or get damped by a down-draft among the sky-scrapers with the depressors running. But difficult? The devil of it is it's so infernally easy! Unless we find Chicago in the calm spot in the middle of the lee, it's the Canada woods for ours. And I despise nature."

Carson smiled at this gloomy forecast, followed as it was by a sprightly whistle. The young man wanted his serious talk with Shayne. So far they had spoken nothing but generalities, and he felt frustrated, held off, played with as a child's lesser plays with a ravine. And he had had no glimpse of Psyche. This made him irritable—the trip was such a waste of time. Well, as to Shayne, he must take things into his own hands, buck up, and come to definite policy. As to the girl——

Mrs. Squire stood by the rail, looking off into the blackness, her hair heavy with a mist now just becoming perceptible. She was listening, as to something with which the ship had no concern, to the howling of the wind down on the earth. Mrs. Shayne, from the cabin door, looked forth at . . .

young woman with distinct displeasure, for Virginia had just said a very naughty thing to Silberberg, in a glib discussion which had unaccountably roused her temper. Over Mrs. Shayne's shoulder Silberberg gloomed back dully into the darker night. Shayne was asking the pilot for data as to distances and course, having carefully wished the women somewhere else. It was not all blue—and up walked young Carson to make things worse.

Virginia, taking him for Silberberg, turned on him a face hot with anger. She stood looking at him a moment, and the displeasure faded away and something quite irreconcilable with it took its place. Because she held out both hands and looked so divine, Carson took them and held them close.

"My robber!" she whispered. "Are you a showman? Are you escaping?"

"Psyché! Psyché!" he gushed, under circumstances distinctly unfavorable for outpourings of such. "Oh, I'm glad! No, escape is quite hopeless. And you are well after—after—"

"After my org?" she queried, and her laugh tumbled down from the clouds, bringing a note as delicious as that of the first bobolink of spring.

"Virginia!" It was Mrs. Shayne who called. "Please come in," said she. "It's wet out there."

Carson gave Virginia his arm, and she swept into the cabin leaning on it proudly.

"Gracie Finley," said she, "I don't know how he happens to be aboard, but this is—this is my—"

"We know," said Shayne. "We picked up your deliverer down in the woods, Virginia."

"Oh!" said she. "Then I—"

"You were the only one, it seems, in ignorance of Mr. Theodore's presence. We have some business to talk over. What's up, Willet?"

Willet, the pilot, appeared at the door with a white. He was a stooped, little, scholarly looking man who wore great silver goggles shoved back on his forehead.

"You and for the course and distance, sir," he replied.

Mrs. Shayne sank back on a broad upholstered dining built into the wall. Silberberg reached Shayne's arm to gain his attention, but the owner of the *Kac* received his pilot's report.

"We seem to be breaking records," went

on Willet. "The distance-gage shows St. Louis nearest, with low variation for head-way. Indianapolis is weak—right around a hundred and fifty miles, and we're getting underway registry that's either Nashville or Chicago, depending on whether it falls off or increases. Plotting the course on the theory that it's Chicago showing up, we're shooting less than a good deal lower than the wind. Here's the trial sheet, sir."

"By George!" cried Shayne, looking at the sheet. "That's going some! What's the matter, Max?"

"I want to see you a minute," growled Silberberg, and drew Shayne out upon the deck.

Willet went back to his work, Mrs. Shayne bowed grandly to the empty air which her gaze indicated as occupying Carson's position; Virginia, begging his pardon with her eyes, turned hastily and followed her aunt, and Carson was alone again.

He felt the insult, the condemnation, and the utter contempt of him which the treatment accorded to him by all but Virginia made plain. He heard them. He worked fervently that he had never stepped aboard to ask a favor of the great and arrogant Shayne. He would enter into no arrangement with him now. He would win his own victory, or fail. He would make the world gasp. He was in a seething fury, a silly, senseless, boy's fury, but his instincts were true.

Silberberg was making it unpleasant for Shayne. This young fellow, he said, had been talking liberties with Miss Susan, and he would not stand for it. He was a stickler for propriety now, forgetting the episode which had made Virginia throw in the clutch of the helicopter, and which had brought Carson into the trigonometry. Perhaps he was suspicious that Miss Susan would not have thrown in the clutch if it had been this young chap paying her his court.

"I tell you, Shayne," he urged hotly, "he must be put off. He must be paid and put off. If he isn't—"

"If he isn't," smiled Shayne, "it wouldn't be a serious matter, would it, Max?"

"Yes?" spluttered Silberberg. "I tell you, it's all over between Federated Metals and Acoustic Power, if he isn't!"

Shayne laughed heartily, but he headed Silberberg mumbled off into mechanical pro-



LIKE A STONE HE FELL UNTIL FAR DOWN IN THE MIST. THE PARACHUTE
OPENED WELL ABOVE HIM

larity. He was ready to do almost anything in his pack-up, which was a weakness of his well known in circles in which affairs do not were known. Shayne saw real danger of a breach, to which no obligation to Carson could have forced him, and he grasped Silberberg's hand warmly. He made his decision without much real difficulty, though he hated being fooled by Silberberg. Yielding, he yielded completely, as a diplomat should.

"Man, old man," said he, "you're quite right. We can't lead him in this wind, but we can settle with him and send him off. Come with me."

Carson was examining his parachute. As the two men entered the cabin he was spreading and closing a pair of light, collapsible Gossamer delectors. He slung the case over his shoulder and stood frowning, the slim perch etc in his hand.

"I have decided," said Shayne, "that your second doesn't interest me."

"Very well," replied Theodore. "You are the sole judge of that, of course."

"And you may consider the negotiations off," went on Shayne.

"I accepted that theory some time ago," replied Carson.

Shayne took out his purse and ostentatiously removed from it a number of bills. "I think I ought to pay you for your time," said he, "and your services to my niece. Please take three, will you, and be good enough to go off with the crew."

If Silberberg had not seen fit to indulge in a sardonic laugh at this exigency, the explosion would not have occurred; but that sneering chuckle acted as a detonator for Carson's temper. He struck Shayne's extended hand, scattering the bills over the floor. One of them slid across to the door and was just blowing out when Silberberg caught it. The others lodged in corners like green snow. Shayne stood with staring nostrils and white with rage. Silberberg, the money resting in his fore-fingered hand, appealed to Shayne not to be rash.

"Don't notice the fellow, Shayne," said he. "He wants to keep his hold on the girl, and—"

The speech was cut short by a blow from Carson's flat hand, delivered with lightning quickness and with stinging force. As calmly as though holding Silberberg good morning Carson spoke to him:

"Be careful how you speak of her," said

he, "or I'll show you over the side. Mr. Shayne, permit me to say that you are a cur. I shall leave this craft at once."

He started to go on deck, but as if seeing nothing, he turned and rapped on the door through which Virginia had disappeared. The girl opened it and, looking breathlessly into Theodore's face, read the story of passion and strife and break. Shayne still stood as if fixed; Silberberg was smothering a bleeding nose with his handkerchief. Virginia gasped, and looked at Theodore questioningly.

"I am about to leave the *Arcturion*," said he. "I could not leave without bidding you good-by."

"Going?" said she, clinging to humiliation of speech because she could think of nothing else. "Have we descended?"

"Keep away from that man!" screamed Silberberg. "He struck me! And he knocked your uncle's money from his hand all over the ship!"

The girl looked at the fugitive bills, which Silberberg had begun laboriously to pick up, and shot a glance of comprehension at Theodore. "You are a man!" said she. "Let me see you safe abroad."

Carson stood aside for her, and they went out upon the mile-high deck. She halted aghast to note that they were still high among the clouds of the storm, piling on through a wild waste of tossing vapor. Beyond the illumination of the ship it was absolutely dark.

"You must be going off!" said she interrogatively. "I'll go with you."

"No," said he. "I shall never see you again, but I shall never forget you. Good-by, Psyche; good-by!"

That instantaneous leave-taking the trembling girl never forgot. Pressing her hands, he started forward as if to clasp her in his arms, while she made no gesture either of yielding or resistance. Then he abruptly turned from her, stepped upon the rail, and dropped off into that black abyss of night and tempest. Like a stone he fell until, far down in the night, the parachute opened wide above him, and with pallid face the girl stood there, peering over into the unpeopled space, her soul filled with horrible visions of the end of that wild and reckless leap at the behest of pride. As she pictured his fall to the solid earth she covered her face with her hands and sank down on the deck, her vision darkened with the deeper darkness of a swoon.

The next installment of "*Virginia of the Arcturion*" will appear in the June issue.



CHARLES RUSHED UPON HIM, SEIZED HIM HARD, AND PULLED MR. GORDON BACK.
(Continued from the 4th June 5)

Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Lough

SIXTEENTH Virginia Square is the guest of her uncle, Percy Shaggy, on his grand striding, the *Ree*, which is hovering over the coast of Alabama. Glimpses on board are Miss Silberberg, the wealthy heiress of the Fortunate Metals Company, and an inventor named Warner. A kind of Warner's new helicopter—a type of small flying machine—is to be made. The attention of Silberberg, which, encouraged by Mrs. Shaggy, he turns upon Virginia, are most sympathetic to the girl. In a spirit of fun she starts herself in the cut of the helicopter and accidentally describing a loose circle hovers aloft in space. After a thrilling flight through the air, the helicopter descends close to the edge of the water, the trailing parachute is caught by two men, and Virginia tumbles out upon the sand. Her rescuers prove to be Theodore Carson, a young Southerner, who is at work on a new idea in flying-machines, and Captain Blomsted, a typical Gulf Statesman. After the girl has recovered from her shock, Carson takes her to a boat to Palmetto Beach, a cove by moon. Returning to the scene of the mishap the following day, Maynard Silberberg hears of Virginia's rescue from Captain Blomsted, who urges Shaggy to see Carson. The next day leads to Carson's Landing, the young man is invited aboard, and being agreed by Shaggy to accompany three men to develop his invention.

Picking up Miss Shaggy and Virginia, the *Ree* starts for Chicago. Silberberg becomes jealous of Carson and finally, upon the afternoon of breaking of an important business deal, that Shaggy put the young man off. Therefore Shaggy reluctantly tells Carson that his project does not interest him, and offers him money for the use of Virginia. Carson indignantly knocks the bank note from Shaggy's hand, and being further insulted by Silberberg, seizes a pistol hole which he has taken aboard with him, and in Virginia's horror drops from the *Ree* into the black abyss beneath.

THE FALL THAT FOLLOWED FAME



THEODORE fell northwest so swiftly that the aeronaut seemed to dart uncontestedly toward heaven. All about him were the teasing folds of the cloud—streaming horn-tails of fog, flocks of aerial wood, invisible, save for the light of the *Ree*, which in its instantly changed the va-

porous details and partially dispelled the weird illusion that he was falling eternally, like a soul hurled into a purgatory of limitless descent. Like the retinal image of a quenched flame, he saw in the mark the eyes of Shaggy's niece and her white face under the quiet pointed hat, blackly amazed at his desperate leap from the airship, then suddenly the pull of the parachute admonished him that at last it was doing its work, and restored to him an acute perception of his situation.

He felt none of the effects of the gale, but the wind burst upward as from the mouth of some huge blower, fighting his descent, stripping off his hat and snapping his hair like whiplashes. Black as the heavens above was all below, until, directly beneath him,

there suddenly burst forth a great red light that blotted the clouds to crimson, turning the heavens to a sky of imaginary vapor spanning a sea of flame. The mysterious light revealed like an outpouring conflagration, filling the falling boy with terror; and then, as swiftly as it had grown, it waned, faded, and the sky was dark again. The fear of the very and unexplainable chilled him more than did the fierce March wind. The expanded parachute suspended him over fiery mystery and an unknown land, wondering, waiting for day, or for clear darkness even, that he might see on what or into what he was falling.

If he but knew the land, he might see the defilement and work his fall over into safety, if safety the neighborhood afforded. How the wind's voice grew! Whether on church-square or chimney or tower, in garden or wood or graveyard or into an open grave, it was a wild, dangerous night in which to land.

Suddenly he burst from the floor of the dead like a meteorite, and saw a long procession of white and violet lights speeding past and away into the distance—the arc-lights of a town set into apparent flight by the speed of his headlong career before the wind. Far off in the glare of a locomotive fire-box, he could see a black fireman

wildly asking. Had there been light for it Carson had meant time to survey his land-fall; but he judged instantaneously that on either side would be the open fields, and to avoid the rocks and thorns he set the direction to swing off his descent toward farms and soft earth.

The trees fled away; the roar of the wind rose about him; he was whipped stungingly by the branches of a tall tree; then a lower one bowed him through its dense top; he had hold of a slim limb, and as it bent like a falling-rod under his weight he let go the shafts of his parachute, the wind spalled from the alken rock, and he tumbled heady into a mattress-like bridal-veash bush and over an upturned wall. Tossed down by the shrubbery, he rose unhurt, so far as he could feel, to find himself by a rustic seat near a dry fountain. On his left he could make out a long building three or four stories high, the roof of which he had barely missed, hovering against the night sky, black, solid, "dark like the fox's heart," and, to his eyes, impossibly sinister.

A high wall running back from each end of this structure seemed to form the garden in—for a garden he guessed it to be. Back in some craggy jungle he heard the thready howl of a great dog, and thanked heaven that he had left no trail. He found his parachute almost unharmed, whipped it about with the lappings, and slung it on his back. The dog's fiercest bark seemed angrier now and, he fancied, nearer. Feeling for his pistol and finding it lost, he limped—for he now discovered that one knee was hurt—across the garden to the place farthest from the dog.

Following the wall, he found it of a piece with that of the house. For two or three hundred feet back it was black and high and impenetrable. The dog was still near, and, though his legs prickled with the fear of fangs at each rattle in the shrubbery, the boy remembered the rear wall to a brick barn into which it was built. Everything was depressingly secure and substantial and well-manicured. Like the walls that surrounded the terrestrial paradise, these structures seemed as firm as the native rock of the eternal hills.

In the other corner was the dog, and he shrunk from exploration in that direction. So, through beds of dry pills, vines, and fig-illies, he crept to the long house and stole across to the fourth side, where he

found a door through the wall, but light-shut and unresponsive. Back by this last long wall he felt his way, still baffled. A sense of distance and incarceration began to overpower him, in the desperation of which he ventured back, even to the barn again, then having completely circumnavigated both the garden and the Cerberus guarding it. He felt, as he passed the kennel, much as Ulysses must have done with the blinded and furious Polyphemus feeling about the cave for him; but on his side, only to make sure that there was no way out. The very sternness of the architecture pointed to this conclusion as a novel and moral certainty. Only one course remained—to knock up the dark house at the rear door and ask to be let out; and from this he shrunk. He knew nothing of the place, its people, or its laws. Still, it was America, and well along toward the middle of the twentieth century, and his punishment would be reasonable, he hoped, paying fervently that the laws of whatever state it might be would not make burglary of his offense, which was "entering," to be sure, but not by "breaking"—unless one counted the kirk-bushes and the bridal-veash—and which quite lacked malice aforethought. Calling up his scattered courage by the drumming in his ears, he went with some steadiness up to the long veranda and was about to violate its columned shades when a shrill whistle sounding from the top of the porch commanded his attention.

It was one of those sharp, hissing boys' whistles made with the curved forefinger stuck into one corner of the mouth and out at the other—an evilable and fondish trick. Theodore hucked into the open, and saw a man on the roof just in the act of swinging himself down over the eaves.

"Get under here, old sport," said a voice, "and give a liberty-loving son of a gun a leg down."

Theodore reined on his shoulder a rather small shoe, nudged up and steadied a somewhat bony leg, and was about to let his burden down, when the liberty-loving one collapsed in all his members and came down by the run, in all ways, and, as it seemed, on all sides of his helper at once.

Carson started forward to raise the discomfited fugitive to his feet, but he was already up, and in the darkness seemed to be bowing and waving his hand to an imaginary audience, like a tumbler acknowledging applause.

"My celebrated Avenas an," said he. "Special gratulation apart to the crowned heads. But hush! Let me greet thee. As ye be noble, salute my cheek; as ye be shab, receive my contemptuous thanks! Hail, old sport!"

"I hope you aren't hurt," said Carson.

"Nay, that's past hoping," answered the other. "I am busted in all ways: compound, comminuted, and violated fractures are now desirable, in view of my worse wounds. I am sore chest, and I fear I have now my parison, too. But I have accepted"—here he spoke piercingly into Carson's ear—"a doom that in another moment would have topped the agonies of deeper hell ruled to the 4th power. But I am selfish! I talk only of myself—and things. Let us face our souls, reveal the secrets of our beings. I wot we are kindred spirits. Wotest thou not so? What?"

Unable to account for his ally's uncommon mode of address, and quite as unable to escape, Carson stood mute, alone with a possible lunatic and a very probable dog, in a walled garden into which he had dropped from the night sky, in an Alcheman suit of clothes, in a climate which in all likelihood belonged to Illinois, but reminded one of Greenland. There seemed to be nothing adequate to say.

"If your being remains reticent as to its inner springs of joy and sorrow," remarked the stranger, as if speaking of some foreign and recalcitrant thing the proper treatment of which might present a delicate problem, "let me unlock its refractory atomic nature with the ferment of my celebrated system of cross-examination, elucidated in the case of Gussell vs. Gussell. If in generalization thou wilt not wot, let us reverse the evolutionary process and proceed from the abstract to the concrete, from the general to the particular. Is what orchestra do you play traps?"

"I am not a musician," answered Carson.

"Stricken out as not responsive," rejoined the stranger. "I never blamed it; but from your caput cometh a rattle like the muted cymbal, and soon like a battery of telegraph sounders. Stay! Is it possible that it emanates from the chattering of your teeth? Curse, you are soiled, or in an age that would reduce a friendly rattle to matchwood. Art cold, fair youth?"

"A little," replied Carson. "I am lightly dressed."

"Then come, come wrap, tra-la-la, with

me," said the strange denizen of the dark house, "to a realm of balmy air and breezes of Ceylon. To heed and if thy body had but scrape the gravel to better ear fligh thou dost, and all thy woe is gilded by the pearly collar of the sunbeam. To hail!"

With a swift, daring movement the stranger turned and, followed obediently by Carson, crossed the garden to a building which Theodore guessed to be a greenhouse. His guide opened the door, and stood back with elaborate courtesy that Carson might precede him. Entering, Theodore found himself among beds of flowers which filled the house save for a central passageway, all in deep shadow, fragrant and warm.

"I shall not freeze," said he to himself, "and that is some comfort."

The stranger stayed so long at the door that Carson began to feel quite sure of having been beguiled into a penon by his polite compulsion, and that the next phone would be the constabulary and arraignment. He was guilty of trespass, and the case for attempted burglary might be plausible, but his sentence could not be severe. He was safe from the dog now, and what matter if the trial should delay his return to the South? In the confusion of his mind, obvious enigmas had lost importance to him, vanished as he was by the supposition of a great hope. Shayne had meant to him everything that might make or mar his life, and he had defied and angered him irretrievably. That was irremediable, but he had struck Silberberg's thick-lipped mouth—and that was worth much. He had had another meeting with the nameless man; she had stood by him against her uncle and Silberberg, who was a great figure and a savior for her lover. These were unvariable facts financially, but they meant so much to the foolish boy that he forgot the man who had enticed him into this flowery jail, forgot everything except the white face of Shayne's niece, pleading against his fatherliness, as, spreading her deck in youthful indignation, he leaped from the sunset and shot downward into the cloud. One of her arms was about the aluminum stanchion, its hand on her breast, the other to her hat. She had changed the flowery bonnet for a little bycock of bottle-green velvet, broadened over by a graceful plume, and worn with the plume over her eyes, the turned-up brim behind and the sharp crown flattened over like the top of a mountain struck while plants by a huge

paddle. He could see it all—the great airship hovering to a fine line in the high mist, the face and eyes and the quiet little hat glowing on with faithful steadiness. Constable! A fig—

"It is too dark," said his guide, rejoicing him, "to make the exchange of cards mean that an empty and insubstantial formality. Yet I would far know more about you than the bare date of your insubstantial as a ladder and the bright and snappy technique of your tooth-clattering. Quite material enough, it is true, had one the time to work it out, but, to coin a phrase, what's she use? Beyond your nocturnal habits, what peculiar volitional defect brings you here? To follow the usual conventional form here, are you a study or a periodical?"

"I don't understand," answered Carson. "I came here quite by accident. I had no intention of coming. I—"

"Quite so," interposed his interlocutor. "Let's go down by the American Beauty bed—there! If we might smoke a match now, I—I estimate that half of us half-logged denizens go ashore here in a state, to coin a word, of my-eyed weakness. I may say I came myself by accident and without meaning to do so, or otherwise—I must have a smoke!"

He seemed to be feeling for a cigar-case; tapping his person in various places where it might be secreted. Then came the scratch of the match, and Theodore scrutinized the face in its flint as, with nervous, unsteady movements, the man lighted the weed.

He was a tall, gaunt person, with deep-set eyes flickering from their caverns with a blurred sharpness, like tongue-lunge seen through a veil. His face was sallow and colorless, with hollows in the cheeks whose unbecomingness of ill health was contradicted by the general appearance of hardness of face and neck like that of seasoned oak. He wore a flat cap with the crown piled forward; and his heavy and long hair, of a neutral brown matching his complexion, fell to his collar in a mass that made any cap seem superfluous. Two or three heavy which-lets lay like a disordered mane over his forehead, mingling with epistles of youthful lightness. His nose was irregularly notched in profile, as if it were the site of something which had been broken off his face with an angular fracture. He had sensitive lips, and a mouth which was shapely and rather fine, but drooped at the corners pathetically. His chin was deeply hollowed

at the base of the lip, and cut through by a perpendicular crease which must have been a bother to his barber. Altogether it was a curiously complex face, both in feature and expression, and spoke in Carson of the inherent wildness and wild ability of its owner. But he looked anything but insane.

His dress, however, brought back the impression of abnormal eccentricity. He had on a colored shirt, and from his high collar stretched a huge red silk tie, unknotted and spreading over his breast like the banners of the social revolution, now greatly overdone. The white evening waistcoat was too low for the shirt, revealing secrets of construction never meant for the scrutiny of any stranger except the laundress. His coat was a long, black frock, the skirts of which, gathered about his legs, fell wide, discharging responsibilities of Scotch plaid, much turned up, and covering those the skirts of which was obscured by successive accretions of dried mud. So much was revealed by the series of matches which he lighted, sitting humped up in an evident attempt to keep the light hidden in the spread of his coat. Carson's head swam in the growing conviction that he had reached a condition in which it was impossible to distinguish between dream and reality, and that this was some disordered nightmare.

"I hope you don't smoke," said the vision, "for two reasons: firstly, when we light a match we run the risk of detection and all consequences at the contemplation of which my partly hypothetical mind constructively recoils; secondly, I find myself winking for my own use and behoof, in my own proper consciousness, my last cigarette."

Carson protested that he did not care to smoke, and they sat on in unexpressed quiet, the cigar glowing and waning like a far-off revolving light.

"I suppose I might explain, sir—"

So began Theodore, but the other's hand waved in dem protest, and his voice interrupted him.

"Explain!" said he. "May, may! Leave explanations for the cross followers of clergy. Already I begin clairvoyantly to see the depths of your being. I know from the seventeenth-century quark to the 'wa,' the slightest 'varish' of the long 'i,' the cosmogonic address derived from the practice of private war, that you are a gentleman, nah, from the South, by gad! And your obliviousness of your annual bent furnishes

proof, *prima facie* but not conclusive, that you are the most difficult of cases for Doctor Witherspoon—a periodical. Rousing from what your attendant took for slumber, yearning for liberty, you came into the garden, Maud, leaving your jag-bone—if any—floating like cotton, who fills himself with the east wind, or, to coin a phrase, any old wind, and holds his breath until you feel the head ache that he is dead, and then lets it burst from his lips in one grand spout that moves the draperies like the breath of a gale, and drives the wakeful inmates mad. Maud, I say! And he, the said inmate, then, rules or he rules, as I have done."

"My name is Carson," said Theodore, "and I am from the South, from Alabama. I—"

"Craighead is mine," rejoined the other. "I am from here and elsewhere. There are twenty places where I might say were there any question under the sun worth voting on, and fifty places where my residence would be vehemently disclaimed by the authorities. I think I may venture to give you, say, as my permanent residence—well further north, only—the *Rat Motel*. Got that down?"

"I—!" began Carson.

"The *Rat Motel*," interposed Craighead. "One deep midnight, in the dead, dead past beyond recall, I was ejected from the *Rat Motel* because my conduct was not up to the shoreward undimmed standards of the place—from the *Rat Motel*—actually torn out, to coin an expression. Dost it not open glimpses of a depravity hitherto fabulous? And when I have been graduated from this emporium, I shall return, pride in my port—meaning nothing vicious—de France in mine eye, and I shall sit down in the *Rat Motel* and behave myself for long, long periods of time—for ages—in the mad, mad whirl of silk hats, Quaker Latin tea, mounted and eyeleted bone, and shimmering ingers, the only person plunged into heady solace, a rack of propriety, standing four-square, or maybe three-cornered, to every hucksterian wind that blows, with its scent of garlic, and Rogation cheer, and spit wine, and volatile oil of common-sense, the active and deadly principle of civility! That's what I'll do!"

After his somewhat complicated premonitions Craighead fell about, and even forgot to smoke. Languid from the long hours of strain and sleeplessness and physical as well as mental reaction in the warm and fragrant greenhouse, Carson grew somnolent.

At short intervals the sky was illumined by a far-off flame which he identified with the heart of flame which had so startled him in his fall from the *Rat* and the regular recurrence of which proved it to be either the flame from the nostrils of some slow-breathing dragon or the chimney of a greenhouse. Craighead sat upright, making occasional stationary gestures with his right hand. Once again he spoke of the *Rat Motel*.

"Oh," said he, "I'll be the peak of the perfection of deniable citizenship—when I graduate from this emporium!"

Simon again saw for the harking of the dog. Craighead's breathing now indicated his expatriation to deep-crumpled protest against a Norfolk Island pine. Carson, who had classified him as a lunatic, now found himself uncertain. The man behaved like a boy playing truant, rather than an adult prisoner escaping, yet of what direction was he afraid? Why was he flying from the mysterious "emporium"? What did he mean by his talk of "standards" and "petalodichs," and by putting Carson down as the latter? All mystery! Only one thing was certain—the superiority of the greenhouse over the open garden with its chill air and its dog. Carson's head nodded sleepily, and when he became conscious it was day. Wholes were blowing, a train could be heard leaving the yards of the near-by town. The cheeriness of the morning sounds advised him that the wind had fallen, and, as proof that it had not been all a dream, there lay Craighead against the tree-pot, his face pale, a pathetic droop softening his mouth, his hair matted, the flat cap at his feet by the half-smoked cigar. Yes, Craighead stood the test of daylight. Like the dog, he was still there.

Two or three men came past the greenhouse, went round it, and walked away again, making some sort of search. They came back after a time, and entered. One was a tall, athletic, ruddy-complexioned youngish man, who seemed to be the leader of the trio. They gazed at Carson and Craighead as if taking stock dispassionately of dogs or horses.

"Well, Mr. Craighead," said the tall one, with an accent distinctly Irish. "I'm no end sorry to find you out of bounds again, sir."

Instantly wide awake, Craighead assumed an attitude of jocular familiarity. "It agonizes me to have given you a moment's pain, Dennis," said he; "but, believe me, I should

have been gnawing the electrodes and howling like a banshee—they howl, don't they?—and I stayed longer in the storm-center of Mr. Waddy's pneumatic shamboring. As between annoying you and becoming dull, one may find difficulty in choosing, Dennis, but well, well, Dennis! I fear we are all selfish!"

From his evident levitation at the mention of his "pneumatic shamboring," Carson guessed that the shorter of Dennis's companions was Mr. Waddy. He was blocky and strong of build, and bearded with gray sconces that grew forward and upward from all points, as if spokes, wheels, and moustache had been trained through a hole for a long time and then suddenly dropped off and left standing. He was puffing audibly. This labored breathing, coupled with his appearance of having dropped heavily, gave him the general effect of one who has leaped suddenly from bed and chased something at high speed. He had on a top-coat over a disabuse of shirt and trousers; on one foot was an arctic over shoe, the other was shod in a Wellington boot. He looked toward Craighead with a sort of perplexed ferocity.

"Mr. Craighead," said he, as if carefully choosing terms of speaking politely, "I've seen all kinds, and you do—best—the Dutch."

"Thank you," said Mr. Craighead, bowing. "The Dutch, Mr. Waddy, are a nice not really heavy, and I am modest, as you know. Yet in my opinion, I may be able to—but, pardon me, Dennis? Have you not met my friend Mr. Carson, from Alabama? A new arrival. Obvious of his tip hither. A periodical, I believe. Mr. Carson, Mr. Dennis O'Grady, Mr. O'Grady, Mr. Carson. Mr. O'Grady is the official dispenser of dope—"

"Took, Mr. Craighead, if I may correct you, sir," said Mr. O'Grady, his accent as correctly British as his name was Hibernian.

"Of course, Dennis," protested Craighead, "I meant none. Please do me the justice to believe, Mr. O'Grady, that I meant none. And is this Mr. Carson's job-box? I hope his shambors are less conscious than Mr. Waddy's, Mr. Carson. I—"

"Assured," suggested Mr. O'Grady softly. "Mr. Evans is the attendant of Mr. Wylie. No doubt an error on Mr. Craighead's part, Mr. Wylie; but we understand perfectly that you are the Mr. Wylie who

was very ill last night, sir, and who departed before we could give him the examination and the formal admission. Mr. Evans will attend upon you, Mr. Wylie; and we hope, sir, to have you feeling much better in a few days, sir."

"You are greatly mistaken," exclaimed Theodore. "I don't belong here at all."

"Quite right, sir," responded Mr. O'Grady heavily. "Quite right. I am glad that you are already able to see, sir, that you belong with Mr. Evans in Room 34, sir, where he will now conduct you. Mr. Craighead, I fear, sir, that this failure to remain within bounds will force Doctor Witherington to—"

"But I am not Mr. Wylie," interrupted Carson fiercely. "I don't know what people are sentenced to this place for, but I am not guilty. I have done nothing. I am from Alabama; my name is Theodore Carson; I am an engineer—an inventor. I—"

"Pardon me," softly suggested Mr. O'Grady, "but I find you have, Mr. Wylie, whom none but kismet can come."

"I dropped in—" began Carson.

"For a social call," supplied Craighead. "Entirely plausible, Mr. O'Grady, and shows how essentially man is a social being."

O'Grady's face softened to no line or curve. He was one of those efficient persons to whom business is no joke, rather the proper subject of one.

"I dropped into this garden from an apartment," reiterated Theodore, "and I couldn't find my way out."

"Pardon me, Mr. Wylie," protested O'Grady, "if I observe that that is not a very convincing narrative. It quite disproves your claim to being an inventor, you know. Your condition, sir, is not that of a person who has fallen from the clouds, you know."

"But I have!" insisted Carson. "Literally, I fell from the clouds. I came down in a parachute."

"In the night, sir?" asked O'Grady. "And with no knowledge of what you were falling into or onto, sir?"

"Exactly so," asserted Carson; "and I really fell by the seat—"

"And swallowed your parachute?" interrupted O'Grady, still unsmiling.

"No!" cried Carson, producing it from under the bench. "Here it is. I broke this coming through the tree-tops. See?"

"I have no knowledge of parachutes," said O'Grady, "but the existence here of so com-

ness a contrivance does not at all prove the absence of Mr. Wythe, and Mr. Wythe is accounted for by no personality except your own, sir. The Surgery Institute loses no patients. You are Mr. Wythe or Mr. Wythe is lost. Hence, sir, you are Mr. Wythe. You will not be detained against your will, sir, longer than is necessary for so far getting it out of your system as to enable you to make a rational choice. Please accompany Mr. Evans and prepare for morning treatment. Mr. Evans has your tonic. More assistants will be provided if you fail to see the propriety of compliance, sir. Good morning, sir. Mr. Craighoad, please go with Mr. Waddy. I shall have a conference with Doctor Witherspoon as to your case, sir."

Mr. O'Quady's calm commands carried with them deep and high suggestions of irresistible force. He was a born autocrat. Wondering how it would all end, Theodore went with his attendant, walking in a daze.

THE MYSTERY OF THE "CARCASS"

Room 34, to which the patient Mr. Wythe was taken, was like the ordinary room of a good inn, save that it had two beds. Mr. Evans ushered young Mr. Carson into it as if conferring a great favor in thus naming him Wythe and arresting him instantly under the new cognomen. He was a brawny man with a thick quavering voice like that of a schoolboy just bursting into tears. Theodore took his measure, and promptly decided that Evans could break him in two in a clutch, but might be eaten.

"Now, Mr. Wythe," wailed Mr. Evans, "we'll get along here, I know, if you're a gentleman, an' you won't do me no dirt. I'm an awful poor man, an' that is my line! Don't ruin me an' put a stigma on the Institute by taking any likes, Mr. Wythe. You wouldn't, would you, now?"

"I am not Mr. Wythe," retorted Carson. "I am Theodore Carson, as I said; and I—"

"This matter of names is so complicated!" quavered Mr. Evans. "No man draws' my pay c'n be expected to work it out. I got awful small wages, Mr. Wythe. My duties is simple. You got your tonic an' treatments reg'lar, an' keep brawn. A whole lot of good-time comes here under special names—I won't! Let's drop this name discussion, Mr. Wythe, an' agree that we'll be reg'lar in pet rules an' you won't deprive my family of a

bit' an' turn me out to starve, by dahn' me dirt!"

Mr. Craighoad repped and entered. Mr. Waddy was available. Evidently the surveillance of the attendants was not of the strictest.

"I quite agree with the remarks of my querulous friend, Mr. Evans—who should have made public manifestation his profusions," said Mr. Craighoad. "Your position, Mr. Carson, is an equivocal one. Your presence or absence, Mr. Wythe, seems to me to be a question purely academic in character, and not within the purview of practical statesmanship. You are an inventor. That is conceded. The question is, What's your field?"

"It is aerostatics," replied Theodore. "I have devised the first effective aerial I—"

"Very interesting!" returned Craighoad. "I have made that a specialty. I know the defects of the present-day aerostats, and I understand the failure of the gas-supported aerostat except as toys for unpractical capitalists. But to the point in controversy. Are you the Father of the monoplane, or the Edison of the hot air? Mr. Evans's porcine tamality has expressed the only conclusion open to him—to accept the Wythe theory as a working hypothesis, and to work it at the regular per diem. Don't foller me?"

"I suppose that this Wythe must turn up, sooner or later," mused Theodore. "But why should I take treatments? What are you—I mean, what are people cured of here, anyhow?"

"A very difficult question," replied Craighoad. "My first difference with Doctor Witherspoon, now unhappily culminating in a diplomatic impasse, grew out of my desire to discuss with him that very question. He said with crude brutality for me to move on, and let the other jags come within the radiance of my willful it-r-thought-wisery. The first question is, Am we cured of anything? That being disposed of—a matter not so easy as might be thought—the question rises to a higher plane and hovers its most right down into the roots of things. We hit hard-pans in the unreachableness of ultimate phenomena. Teleologically—"

"What do they do to you?" persisted Theodore.

"They give you dope; they feed you fat a few days on brain mash; they shoot you once a day; they give you a little bottle to sinuate what they call your third the first night on so,

though why they call it a thirst which is only a contemplative tendency entirely unconnected with imagination, dependent upon not. The dope is the summation of all villainies—and that's no child's homework just, either or either; but I am assured that it builds the sick and makes the well a harder physical proposition from moment to moment. The drinking will do no harm. They might use dish-water, and it would do just as much good. Mark, I don't say it is dish-water—Witherspoon guards his sacred secret well—but it won't do you any more harm than would that by-product of the academy. Altogether you'll find it wiser to be Wylie. Let's to breakfast!"

Breakfast! Here was something to be "understanded of the people." Carson was famishing, so he swallowed the pillow-talk "summat of all villainies" presented truthfully by Mr. Evans, took the arm which Craighead ceremoniously offered, and walked down a broad stairway ornamented with potted palms and through a spacious lobby in which a clerk behind a desk, a platoon of bell-boys, and groups of ordinary citizens, clothed and apparently in their right minds, imparted an impression almost amounting to a guarantee that the place was only a hotel. They entered a cold, where Mr. Craighead, with a familiarly born of use, moved to a table already half occupied.

"I hang with us, gentlemen," said he kindly, to two men who had preceded them, "a fellow-lover of the hottest mathematics. Greet him with the grand leading sign."

"I didn't know," said one, "that they treated them cases here."

"They do, Mr. Bascom," returned Craighead, "but, thank whatever gods there be, they can't cure them. What they lack here is a sense of humor, Mr. Bascom. Let me introduce my friend Mr. Carson-Wylie, of Ferrisville."

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Carson-Wylie," said Mr. Bascom, stirring his salt-soled eggs; "and I hope they do you as much good here as they have me."

"Thanks," replied Carson. "But the fact is—"

"But me no buts," broke in Craighead. "I think I may venture, among friends, to say that Mr. Bascom is our most popular freak. He has read the seventy-fourth Rulanga, which saith, 'Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why, drink! for you know not why you go, nor where,' and made a whole-

hearted endeavor to follow its teachings. He succeeded in the realization of the text-maker's inability to state whence he came nor why, why he went nor where, or, in fact, whether he was going or coming. But in the matter of following further obedience to Mr. Omar's belated teachings, he was, to coin a phrase, up against it. Hence he marketed the place in his north. Mr. Bascom is passionately fond of Khayyam."

"Never under no such fancy name," replied Bascom gravely; "but I've been fond of most everything that would make the drunk come."

"That includes Khayyam," responded Craighead.

"It was this way," went on Bascom. "If you're a periodical, Mr. Carson-Wylie—"

"I assure you," asserted Craighead, "that in London, where Mr. Carson-Wylie is forced to live in order to keep his system healthy, he is rated in the best columns as a periodical."

"Then you will understand," resumed Bascom, "that, after being drunk in Poona for six weeks, I was in a kind of bad shape. Clothes gone, took both hands to get a glass to my mouth, kicked out of places, had some fits—ever have a whiskey fit?"

"Never!" cried Carson.

"The patterns of hell," said Bascom, "are wonderful skills to 'em I had sold my sample-cases—I was trucking out of Bloomington for Fuller and Fuller—"

"How appropriate!" ejaculated Craighead.

"—and," went on Bascom, "hooked everything loose. Now when those whiskey fits come on, you have to have booze. I had made friends with a highwayman, and he loaned me a little drink, and stood by to keep me from cutting my throat while I dug the gold out of my teeth, sold it, and accounted for every cent. He was a good fellow for a highwayman."

"That shows," interrupted the fourth man, "how we pigs are forever 'banged' by a tow-string over the edge of hell, as 'sakes' bet whether it'll burn off or not. I tell you, I drink—"

"I join in the drink," said Craighead. "I often—I say your pardon! Colonel McGilvery, permit me to make you acquainted with Mr. Carson-Wylie, of Ferrisville Square, London. Colonel McGilvery is the owner of his home county, Mr. Carson-Wylie, and is here being characterized."

"I'm right pleased to know you," said the colonel. "And I want to encourage you to stick when you get out, Mr. Carson-Wyke. I am not—if Mr. Craighoad will allow me—the accuser of my country, but my law book feared I was going so I could shoot single-mindedly while some double, or they all presented a petition, sub, mine: me to come back; or I'm back as a public duty."

Colonel McGilvery was not the last to urge upon Carson the advisability of "sticking" when he got out. The inmates gathered about him after breakfast and labored with him as "workmen" in ill-furnished "protected meetings" wrestled for the salvation of sinners. There was really something fine in this.

He assured them of his good intentions. He was rendered humble and almost humble by the hopelessness of trying to extricate himself from his equivocal position owing to his reprehensible manner of getting into the institute and the mass of fanciful misrepresentations of Mr. Craighoad. So he listened and thanked them. A man with locomotive stank said that he was ten years younger since coming—and went away carefully calculating at every step just where he would put his feet next, and inevitably setting them unrespectfully elsewhere. A distinguished-looking paragon was pointed out as a railway accident taking the case at the request of his company. Another had wasted six fortunes in recession. That fine-looking gentleman had been here before and relapsed through the accidental taking of Jamaica ginger while ill. And a jewelry salesman pointed out Craighoad as a mighty bright fellow who was crazy and wouldn't observe the rules, and would be "fixed" by Doctor Witherspoon. Carson felt that he would never, never stand in need of further admonition to temperance than the memory of this Sargasso Sea of the devils of drink.

"There's a new fellow here," said the jewelry man. "I haven't seen him, but he came in paralyzed last night, and was found boxing with Craighoad in the greenhouse this morning. Seen him?"

Craighoad and Carson walked through a stately peristyle to a low building called the laboratory, but termed by the patients the "shot tower." Theodore was astonished at the throng assembled for the "shot" treatment—of which he had as yet no conception. Men of all sorts anxiously watched the clock. The schoolboys fearful of being tardy. They

formed in two columns, seating on two sides, across the farther ends of which stood two desks exactly alike. All along their coats over their right arms, ducking this in their shirts at the left shoulder.

Craighoad and Carson preceded Carson—Benson looking in a mirror at new fillets in his teeth, Craighoad seating ripples of disorder along the line by advising him as to whether Carson was himself or Wyke. Two young men, easily classified as new-lid physicians, stationed themselves like sentinels at the desks. The clock struck. There was a jostling at the rear caused by late-comers, at which the serious young doctors frowned fiercely. The first moved forward, and the men as they passed the physicians seemed to undergo some sort of operation. Once past this ordeal the patients threw on their coats and passed on in an imposing, smooth-shaven man to the left, who gave to each a hand-shake and a momentary audience.

Theodore found himself in the human current, and drifted with it. On closer view, he saw that the doctors probed the patients with little, glimmering weapons; but he reasoned that it could be nothing very severe. More than any of the others, however, Craighoad seemed to shrink from it.

"Any locomotive stank given on that stabber?" he queried, "or cancer, or any of the evils of the curriculum?"

The doctor frowned as he reached for a syringe.

"What did I tell you?" said Craighoad, as the physician received his inquiry with professional gloom. "No more humor than a house-driver's union. Check!"

With his sincere protest against the work of the needle, Craighoad passed on, and Carson took his place. The doctor looked searchingly into his face, seemed puzzled, and turned to the tray for another syringe.

"You should have noted up your sleeve or cut it," said he sternly. "Red it up!"

Theodore rolled up his sleeve; whereupon, with a startling expertness, the man of medicine punched up a bit of the brown flesh, shoved in the needle, pressed down the piston, and Theodore was "shot." With a stinging in his arm, and wondering as to the whys of it all—though he knew by this time that he had dropped out of the night sky into full membership in a drink cure establishment—he passed on.

The imposing, smooth-shaven man was the great Doctor Witherspoon. He met such

patient with a standardized smile, clasped each hand with a grip of absolute uniformity, and said: "Good morning, Mr. Bascom"—or whatever the name might be. "And here is the apparatus this morning? And the tongue, please! Pulse regular, I observe. *How's your head your constitutional this morning?*" Improving rarely, Mr. Bascom. *Good morning!*"

But he met Craighhead with a frown instead of a smile. "Please stand aside, Mr. Craighhead," said he; "I wish to talk with you."

"The bowstring, the capital, or the grand-viziership with the title of American Superintendant of Dogs, O Illustrissimo?" inquired Craighhead. "Or wasn't my poppy done right?"

Doctor Witherspoon was holding out his hand to Theodore, smiling the standardized smile, somewhat hardened at the Craighhead-irreverence. "Good morning, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Allow me," said Craighhead severely. "Let me present Mr. Carson Wyke, of Ypsom Court, Yde Park Terrace, Lon'on. The best bet even as to whether Mr. Carson Wyke came in a day-coach and in a minute last evening, or dropped from an airship in the night and was tried by old Tipt, whose hound bark terrifies all who do not know that he is a case of *ven, et postea nihil*. Mr. Carson, Doctor Witherspoon. Tell the doctor the secrets of your alimentary canal, Mr. Wyke. Know each other!"

Doctor Witherspoon stood in horror and indignation contemplating this lost creature, as far below the ordinary "M. D." victim as to stone and no brain him, here in his hall, his vaults near—in the very laboratory. The patients stared in amazement. The great doctor could scarcely credit his own impressions, he was so outraged and upset. For never for a moment did the iron discipline relax. The doctor looked at Mr. O'Grady, who, like a silent and substantial ghost, floated forward and waited Craighhead in an inner door which closed behind him as right the portals of the Institution have shut in some desecrated heretic.

"Good morning, Mr. Wyke," said the doctor. "And is the appetite better? Put out your pulse, please! Tongue very regular, continuing last night, Mr. Wyke. Don't eat your medicine, and no more nighs in the greenhouse, Mr. Wyke. *Good morning!*"

But even noticed the unapproachable tongue and pulse in the ritual, nobody allowed himself the luxury of a smile, and the routine of the great drink-case went on.

Carson departed now fully resolved to escape. He went with Mr. Evans for a long walk through the country town. Mr. Evans's pleadings had made him reluctant to run away—he saw the Evans family dying one by one of inanition if he did, but he must get away. He might appeal to Doctor Witherspoon, but he felt that the one amazing story of his arrival must be received with incredulity by that great man's thoroughly practical mind. The departure of Carson would throw the books out of balance. A credit item of one man was demanded. Theodore supplied the man. The accounting department would refuse to adapt the incredible notion that he was Carson, who had dropped from the clouds, thus forcing the credulity that Wyke had scratched into this man.

He allowed these things so to depress his spirits that he was glad of the arrival that evening of Mr. Craighhead, from whose exalted manner he surmised that something unusual had happened.

"You," said Craighhead, "are a Latinist, Mr. Wyke?"

"Not a very profound one," replied Carson. "The engineers are stronger in the modern languages, you know."

"A mistake," replied Craighhead. "I've made a specialty of the educational value of the dead ones. Sort of sympathy with 'em, you know. Maybe you can give me the passive form of the Latin verb *passum*, however? *Passum*, meaning can."

"*Passum?*" repeated Carson. "Why, it hasn't any passive."

"It hasn't?" growled Craighhead. "Sung again! But I must have the passive of *passum* for the motto of my memorial coin. *Passum*, can; *passive*, to be carried—the highest achievement. Fourty-six, look upon me!"

Obeying, Carson noted that he still wore the evening waistcoat, the colored shirt, the frock coat, and the checked trousers. He had thrown himself into a depressing attitude with his fingers clasped in his hair.

"In me," he went on, "you see the world's most unemotional character. To him one vacuum have I ever been true—timid. To that am I ever attached. Fined from the kindergarten, for a hat? For becoming bored by hockey and going down, and leading a revolt. I never finished eight years' matters never undertaken. I was six months shy—to coin a word—of graduation at the village high school. At the eleventh hour and fifty-sixth minute was I expelled from my ma-

Apex master. The diploma to which I am almost entitled would paper this room. I thought aspiration from the *Mad Men* the best, but now I am ousted hence because I am corrupting the morals of the inmates! Is it not the height, the crown, the apex, of infamy—the apex rays of the spectrum of disgrace? I sympathize with Mr. Tumbelson of Berkeley Square. I see in his post-mortem career a prophecy of mine own. But, old sport, what a wonderfully and unsurpassably complete structure it makes of my character!"

"It is too bad——" began Theodore.

"Too bad?" interrupted Crayhead. "Ow, don't put a flat strong, owld chap! But it is profoundly unpleasant, doesn't ye know." And then with tragic intensity he concluded: "In the world's fields of highest endeavor many are called, but few are chosen. My unique claim to distinction, sir, is in this, that whoever is-in-is-on the fogles blow I, Crayhead, remain the Great Uncalled. Me be the blind baggage and the tumble-can hat—Happy Blookin Crayhead, mine the happiness. Begone, dull hat! Tears, happy tears! And die, O ye tears! Great jumping gastroenteritis, what a world!"

"But," ventured Theodore, in a sincere desire to comfort his friend, "you've had the treatment, you know."

"True, Elphus-Elphus—say, I will dub thee Elphus, for you have not been cured of your right to call yourself Elphus or Elphie still—true, I have had the treatment, its dis-water is in my veins, its dope in my assimilative system. The Witherspoon truths, so well adapted to the second-reader grade, must remain in whatever vermiform appendix the volume of my brain provides for the retention of pharisaicness ponderosity. I shall lose my sense of humor. I shall become bourgeois, unbearably, philistine, cross. I must go forth and reb folks like any other good citizen. Would that the chance might present itself ere I depart for home. By George! That reminds me—I have no home!"

That was delivered in exactly the tone in which one might announce the leaving behind of a handkerchief or cigar-case. Quite as a loss what to say, Carson said nothing. Crayhead meanwhile ceiling as if at a new and amazing thought. Into this silence entered Mr. O'Grady, Mr. Evans, and a slender person of about Carson's size, who at once began the walking of imaginary games on the wall-paper, clapping his thigh and laughing at every failure.

"This," said Mr. O'Grady, introducing the indoor luncheon, "is Mr. Wyke, Mr. Carson."

"My most dear confirmed!" blazed Crayhead. "The one man I ever loved turns out to be—oh, ye gods!—both a teller of truth and a victim of regular habits. The last straw, and no jeep!"

Carson looked at Wyke, awaiting Mr. O'Grady's development of his case.

"We are, of course," said O'Grady, "sorry to have interfered with your plans, Mr. Carson, but——"

Mr. O'Grady's discourse, in which Carson could feel himself being placed erroneously in the wrong, was interrupted by Mr. Wyke's making a swoop upon an imaginary animal on Mr. O'Grady's nose.

"I must caught him!" he cried. "A humbly! A humbly! Sunday, goats, moparose Monday, Tuesday, three, four Wednesday; homets yesterday; and humbly! humbly! today. Big game soon! Ha, ha, ha, ha! Whoop!"

Crayhead attentively scrutinized Mr. Wyke, who was looking about the room with a wild sensation of north. "Long-lost brother, evidently," remarked the Great Uncalled. "I note the Crayhead strawberry-mark. Well, when he gets to elephants I may claim relationship."

"Of course," went on Mr. O'Grady, paying no attention to the incident, except to use and examine for blood-stains a neatly folded handkerchief, "your being found in the greenhouse has been partially explained, and we are not disposed to make you trouble. The usual payment for treatments will not be insisted upon, though always collected in advance, and those you have had will be a total loss. In fact, with our customary liberality, we shall leave to you both that and your board and lodging since you so strangely came into our—into our midst."

"Hoor! Hoor!" ejaculated Crayhead. "Hoorie for the important! Hip! and again Hip! Witherspoon favorit!"

"And if you will kindly sign these material receipts in full for all claims on both sides, we will give Mr. Wyke his room, and—here's the pen, Mr. Carson, or."

Theodore had already made the first stroke of the "T" when Crayhead rushed upon him, stayed his hand, and pushed Mr. O'Grady back.

"Castil, avram!" he roared. "With dignity the widows and orphans this youth may

The Singer

accumulate of their cause of action against this dope-shotten emperor? Back, slave! You reach him only over my dead body. Receipts in full? Not on your life—to use an expression. You have shot his poisonous blood full of dish-water and hog-pare, you have filled his stomach and voraciously stomach with dope, you have committed on him false imprisonment, assault and battery, and malpractice, if there be any need to your practice. His spine is even as wet string for kindness. He is disgraced so that he falls below the standard of the human wreck—he is mere debris and junk. His reputation—the immortal part of himself—is gone, and what remains is bestial. He has had Japheth forced upon him, instead of being allowed to achieve it at the expense of his patrimony, as you, O Dennis, and I have done. You have unpoisoned his appetite for

light wines, and may as well pass him the Duckier Drink first as last. He has suffered, and must ever suffer, most excruciating pain and agony, and both mental and physical anguish. He's a good gadding! And I, the greatest personal-injury specialist in the legal world, as his attorney, demand ten thousand pounds as damages, taking the receipt of which well and truly to be paid in lawful money of the rubles, we'll take the emporium in execution, make Witherington a stable-boy with you as assistant whip, both of you to sleep with Tige. We don't sign nothing. See?"

He turned to Carson, drew himself up, and with tragedy in every feature—an astonishing feat in facial expression—spoke with a drop-toned exaggeration of Carson's Southern accent.

"Othello's occupation's done come back!"

The new installment of "*Wagoner of the Air-Lanes*" will appear in the July issue.



The Singer

By FANNIE & MARIE PALMER

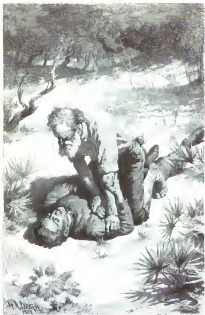
I've sung all over the wide, wide world,
From frozen heights where the snows are heaped,
To blossomed meadows where rivers parted,

From the languorous east to the turbulent west,
I've traveled and sung in a crooked quest
For a place where a singer's soul might rest;

To peasant and prince, to slave and king,
I've sung all the songs that women sing,
And smiled at the pleasures that each would bring;

But whether the song were long or brief,
There never was one that brought relief
To my world-sick soul with its careless grief.

Till I wandered back to the old home nest,
And there learned the song that has brought me rest—
The lullaby crooned to the child at my breast.



CAPTAIN HARBORD LEAPED UPON WINTER'S BAIL, BORE HIM TO THE GROUND,
AND WAS UPON HIM, PANTING

(A picture of the star hunter)

Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Leigh

Virginia Carson is the guest of her uncle, Fables Shayne, on his great air-ship, the *Boe*, which is hovering near the coast of Alabama. Others on board are Max Selberberg, the wealthy head of the Ford Motor Company, and an inventor named Craghead. Attracted Selberberg's new helicopter—a type of small flying machine—is to be made. The attention of Selberberg, who is managed by "Miss Shayne," is turned upon Virginia, the most beautiful in the girl. In a spirit of fun she runs herself on the rim of the helicopter, and accidentally touching a lever sends herself into the air. After a thrilling flight through the air, the helicopter descends close to the edge of the water, the trailing painter is seized by two men, and Virginia tumbles out upon the sand. Her two men prove to be Theodore Carson, a young chemist, who could work on a new kind of flying machine, and Captain Harwood, a royal Gulf Statesman. After the girl has recovered from her shock Carson takes her to a house in Palmbeach Beach, a town by the coast. Returning to the scene of the mishap the following day, Max and Selberberg learn of Virginia's rescue from Captain Harwood, who urges Max to rescue Carson. "The air-ship lands for Carson's Landing, the young man is in need of a boat, and being urged by this we he agrees to accompany them north to America, his invention."

Picking up "Miss Shayne" and Virginia, the *Boe* starts for Chicago. Selberberg becomes partner of Carson and finally, having upon the alternative of breaking off an important business deal, that Shayne put the young man off. Theodore Shayne returns to tell Carson that his project does not interest him, and offers him money for the rest of all Virginia. Carson indignantly breaks the business from Shayne's hand, and being further enticed by Selberberg, accepts a purchase which he has taken aboard with him, and to Virginia a basket drops from the *Boe* into the lake above him. He lands safely in the grounds of Doctor Miller's research laboratory for the cure of lunatics, where he meets an eccentric inventor, a heavy named Craghead, and being made for another patient is finally detained and treated. When the strange man discovers the first flight to select Carson to sign a release for all claims, but Craghead through previous ill and manages himself as Carson's attorney in a damage suit.

THE RETURN OF SHAYNE'S OCCUPATION



FROM the hour when Theodore Carson, angered at Fables Shayne of the Aviation Trust, and still more fiercely enraged at Mr. Selberberg, his guest, had dropped from the deck of Shayne's air ship into the garden of the Station Institution, Craghead had dominated him. He had accused

the character of Tyler at Craghead's suggestion, and when, as Mr. Tyler's suddenly running up, Craghead had demanded damages from the institute for suffering of which Carson was largely ignorant, he had allowed the demand.

Craghead was clearly no proper guide for a young man whose affairs were in so critical a condition, but Carson had confided in him. He had grasped the new and unique principle of Carson's aircraft at one leap of his oddly energetic and active mind, and as he outlined concrete plans for developing a monopoly of the air with it, Theodore believed and allowed

himself to dream of power and fame and the girl whose face haunted him—pale as his lips into the depths of the morning clouds. And then the giddy of his uncompleted task stung him again. He must live to the shed in the Gulf States, complete the flying machine, and bring it to the notice of the world, in spite of the enmity of Mr. Shayne—upon which his new confidence rested. He must—

"I know," broke in Craghead. "But be practical. The money, such as that: You come and find me unrelated to the world, a great force for a number of things, with no way of proving it. You make a profession for me. I was taught, not to remain in taught. What am I now? A great personal injury lawyer developing into a professional ambulance chaser. I was out of touch with the world of finance. I have now had the justification for the organization of the great Carson-Craghead Aircraft Corporation."

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Carson. Craghead approached Carson on tiptoe, and whispered: "I've found a helicopter," he heard, "and got him hypnotized. We'll use him to-night. I've done the real work."

see that you make good in the insignificance details."

All that day Carson watched Craighead as one might study a recently captured animal of the Zoo. From a bench covered with the labels of foreign travel he took a sheet of cardboard and pinned upon it an elaborate sign which bore the legend:

CRAIGHEAD

ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW

That he fastened on the outside of the door, chuckling from time to time as he noted passers-by pause as if to read it. After a while he added to it, "Personal Injury, Car-a Specialty," and found a room closer the hall from which he could watch the one players pass the sign, shooing off as if from a main-trap. The height of Craighead's pleasure came when Mr. O'Grady, himself finally passed, read the sign over and over as if to make sure that the unpeakable effectiveness were not really a hallucination, and departed suddenly in a sort of dignified panic. Then Craighead went swooping about looking for hard surfaces on which he sketched an additional design advertising the new legal business in Room 35.

"We must be economical," said he. "If we can appropriate statements enough for a month it will pay to get a rubber stamp made."

Later that afternoon Craighead went out, returning with several legal-looking books, which he ranged upon the dresser in decoratious order—an old set of *Bliss's Statutes* and a tattered "*Bliss's Legal Maxims*," from which he read anxiously such Latin maxims as "*De mactato non reverti*," "*Peius est esse, peius in amicitia*," and the like, and lectured upon them very informally. The remainder of the library, composed of a ten years' file of "*Martin's*," "*Legal Dictionary*," containing nothing more authoritative than two of the world's lawyers. In each of them Craighead interlined in ink on the proper page his own name, with the highest professional rating and financial standing.

"This may dear God will!" said he, "may seem to you like trifling, but in the life of business—and the business of life there is no such thing as a trifler. Take care of the trifles, and the results will take care of themselves—and the margin and the balance sheet. This library I consider my main-castle. When O'Grady's goes west, it means, oh, it'll throw a crimp into 'em."

They went out for a walk to give O'Grady a chance, as Craighead expressed it, to see what he was up against—a statement that mortified Theodore greatly. On their return, Mr. O'Grady seemed to have been wrought upon by what he was "up against", for he asked Craighead if he would be so good as to give him a few moments. Craighead looked at his watch, glanced back at some, and asked Theodore if their business could wait. When Carson admitted that it could, O'Grady said, "Thank you, sir!" in the tone of a parier accepting a tip.

What under heaven had suddenly raised Craighead from his drooped position in the attitude to a thing to respect and pause, Theodore could not imagine, nor guess the reason for Craighead's sudden laughter as he sat drawing reflections against O'Grady and Witherspoon for obtaining money under false pretences, for false imprisonment, malicious assault, and the like, which he carefully declaimed, in a style so intensely legal that Theodore was impressed with the terrible nature of the case against the institute. The per-sonality specific than read the accusations in slow tones that rolled thunderously out into the hall through the transoms, and arranged them in careful disorder on the table, with the dockings plainly visible.

"Will you let the lawyers and moral reformers come into the great Craighead?" asked he of the man-phere. "Then take the verification terrible man-serve out. Theodore, when we open this room will be full of carpentered still by these impeachments of O'Grady and Witherspoon. If there's room for enough to die in the instance deadly breach of the criminal code, we'll get Witherspoon. This is the master-stroke—and under the authorities we shall be guileless. Fix upon their law! Come now, fair youth, and like with me?"

Explaining that they would be troubled for the hall boards, Craighead offered the strategem of "leaving a complete road about the jaw of the marketing snout" down the railroad track. They crossed a dry field, followed a farm road, and came back into the village, on the opposite side. Craighead opened up and down the street, hastily opened a gate before which they had been lurking, and hurried Carson to a broad porch, under tall elms and maples leafy with swelling buds. He pushed the bottom, and they swung.

The house was a columned, old-fashioned

vision which in an unpretentious, colonial style was fine and impressive. The grounds must have covered ten acres. The trees were strong, wholesome specimens, as high and leafy as to make the place shadowy like a wood. The grass had been left unclipped the preceding year, and was uneven like a pasture. A cow perched at dawn around the veranda. Near the fence stood a farm wagon equipped with sideboards for the hauling of corn. Hoes and other farm-tools lay about as if put out in anticipation of the work of spring. And all these in the grounds of a well-kept house, thoroughly in repair, even the porch-tiles on which Craighead pressed again was polished until it shone.

At slow steps in the hall Craighead squared Carson's arm spasmodically. The door opened, and there stood before them a low figure in which Theodore noted something familiar, and a voice not altogether strange, he thought, invited them into the "other room."

"Mr. Carson," said Craighead, "does not recognize in our host the erstwhile guide of my wandering and waddly feet. Mr. Carson, Mr. Waddy."

Mr. Waddy, ignoring this reintroduction, led them silently down the hall, past a door which gave forth scuffling sounds, female voices, and the peeping of young children, and took them into a snug den the shelves of which were covered with books—tall, imposing, leaved-looking tomes in three-darkened bindings—where they sat down in leather-upholstered chairs gray with dust. Mr. Waddy opened the door of a small room—over the page of which ran into the chimney above a fine old mantel, and there in a double handful of corn-cobs from a box in the corner. The fire raged up, and by its flickering light Theodore saw that the curious-looking machine which flanked a fine box of Shakespeare was a corn-separator, and that what he had taken for a frame in the corner was a string of seed-corn, composed of pairs of corn tied together by their husks and hung over a wire. In its deeper personal implications it was the most baffling room Theodore had ever seen.

"You are here," said Craighead, "an illustration of the manner in which the souls of things express those of people. Have we had the reflects mingled with the defective, serial with serials, literature with litter, the chary with the dairy, expending our good hired Mr. Waddy, who combines the types of the more or less honest prince of hosts

inward and the heavy-handed son of sat. The owner of eight banks sits here in the shade of his own cream separator and seed-corn, surrounded by art, Addison, and Elzevir, all craved with the dulcet and soft from which we are made, to which we return, and out of which, under the meager conditions, all wealth is derived. I am touched!"

"I don't," said Mr. Waddy. "Not yet!"

A pause succeeded this Delphic remark, broken at last by Theodore's inquiry as to whether Mr. Waddy was active in eight banks and if he did not find his duties irksome.

"No," replied Mr. Waddy, still Delphic. "Country banks—the life's run 'em. I come here to have a quiet time in my own way—as' we here I make out!"

Theodore felt hurt, and was about to reply that if Mr. Waddy's privacy was so precious he would no longer intrude, when their host ceased pulling his beard and eyebrows, waddly peeped out into the hall, and returned, smiting his palm with his fist in unmistakable agitation.

"Taken out the incalculator?" he cried. "The hatch'll be runned! Reduced!"

"Pardon me," said Craighead, "if I mention the fact that some change—or catastrophe—comes taking place here."

"I'd got that of 'em all!" wailed Mr. Waddy. "As' yet as I get things right Caroline comes to 'take care' of me! I don't be allowed to care a cent by 'erkin' for Witherspoon—as' it brought me into such society! Them japs is mighty nice fellers, some of 'em."

"I thank you," said Craighead, with an excess of manner, "and as for your being condemned by family pride to sterile notes—now, it is truly a shame. But is Caroline a sister?"

"Only daughter," answered Mr. Waddy. "Come to live with me. Sentin' things is right!"

"Mr. Waddy," said Craighead, "bear up under this. It may be for the best. And let us take up Mr. Carson's great project for monopolizing aviation. I have long believed that some one would turn up with the machine to colonize the air, but since the time of Santos-Dumont, Farman, and the Wrights aerial navigation has made no real progress. Mr. Carson is my guess who has them by the short hair. I know it. I have made a specialty of this. We offer you the unique chance to be with us conqueror of the world."

Mr. Carson will be glad to explain his answer."

"I can't put a screw in it!" said Mr. Waddy. "Certainly not," replied Craighend, as if Mr. Waddy's remark were the most natural thing in the world, "until you have ciphered the thing down to horse rails. And then—but tell Mr. Waddy about it, Mr. Carson. You need not enter into the affairs of millions; you have had and spared—just describe the machine."

Carson switched on the lights, and they gathered about the table. The boy talked slowly at first, but as the flame gave the wheels had the rare experience of becoming a man, discourse upon the thing which dominated his entire and present life. It was complex, much of it too technical for Mr. Waddy, though familiarity with the concrete things of his practical career had made him acute. Once in a while he interpreted a question which craved intelligible comprehension of the heart of Carson's explanation. The boy explained that his answer differed from all others, in having wings like a bird's, not so flap, like those of the absurd orthoptera of 1895, and yet using three-fourths of their surface in beating the air with a straight thrust like that of an oar in water.

"Don't job me screws!" asked Mr. Waddy at this point.

"Not at all," answered Carson. "The screw can never be effective, because it strikes with a drag. It will do its worst, but it requires a more effective thrust. When your propeller blade moves at a hundred miles an hour, say, you have a lift of thirty pounds in the square foot of surface, with the direct stroke. But the surface of the screw—"

"Now, how d'ye figger that?" asked Mr. Waddy.

Carson repeated laboriously, showed how in his new wing the whole surface revolved in various striking angles against the air. "Why," he cried, "I can lift weights that some of the other air-ships can't, and fly off like an eagle with a kick!"

Mr. Waddy wrinkled his head now, instead of shaking it. The doctor's enthusiasm was infecting him. Craighend, out of the room, stood over there, peering through at the drawing. Mr. Waddy was getting a grip upon the principles. The wing-blades were made long, tapering blades, the kind of which, in a new application of old principles, was under perfect control, so as to lift directly upward, to drive obliquely in any di-

rection, or to haul the aircraft suddenly downward.

"Can you nine right straight up," asked Mr. Waddy, "without ramms' along like a buster?"

"I sure can!" replied Carson, talking into dialect. "No bird can do that—no big bird. It's a better, stranger thing than any bird. The best any other machine can do is to support four pounds in the square foot of surface. With my new motors, I can fly off with five times that, and I've got four times their bearing surface. I can—"

"What kind of motors you got?" interrupted Mr. Waddy.

Carson went into details of cylinders, weight per horse-power, revolutions per minute, fuel consumption, and the like. The old men looked through his spheroes, whiskers, and mustaches at Carson and the drawings.

"What if your engines stop?" he asked—"when you're a mile high and over water, machine?"

"I can soar!" answered Carson. "I can make head-ways and gain height with no power, if there's wind—and I can stay up for hours, with the propellers set for aeroplanes. But the best thing I haven't mentioned—the gyroscopic balancing device."

"What's that?" asked Mr. Waddy.

"Why, it's the successful application of the gyroscope to aviation."

"They need to talk about that," observed Mr. Waddy, "long ago—the Romans single-rail roads. I thought it turned out that the gyroscope was too heavy for air work."

"They are too heavy," cried Theodore, "if you use them to do the balancing—that's sure. And so we have had to balance by feeling, just as we do a bicycle. Thought isn't quick enough, so you have to rely on feeling, as a blind does. But I use little gyroscopes, not so control by their weight and area, but to distribute power to the wings and rudder—positive, automatic distribution of power. Why, if the engines of my machine should fall dead, it would fly on just as he set it until they had been exhausted. It feels and thinks!"

The three men sat looking at one another, so far oblivious of their surroundings that they did not notice the opening of the door, nor see the woman who entered.

"Papa!" she said.

Mr. Waddy rose hastily and faced her. She was rather young, rose, plump, and quite too jolly looking for her half-morning, which

she filled to a smootheness that showed marvelous adaptation of talent to career. She looked like Mr. Waddy, but was undeniably pretty. He was blocky and short, she was round and plump, with small hands and feet. His eyes, lost in huge brows, were small and deep-set, hers were wide with a glimmer of good fun in them. His face was a human jungle growing all ways a well-kept beard should say, her cheeks were smooth and pink, her lips were red, and the Waddy-anarchy of hair gave her outline a charming rounded and comely character which would have converted a small girl of neighborhood.

"Papa," said she, "this is hardly a place in which to entertain these gentlemen. We have cleared out the east parlor."

"Oh, yes?" asserted Mr. Waddy, with jerky hints. "To be sure, Caroline! Take 'em in, won't you? I've got to see the hired man. My daughter, Mrs. Graybill, Mr. Craghead, Caroline, a—a friend of mine—Mr. Carson, of Alabama. Excuse me for a minute, gentlemen."

"I assure you, Mrs. Graybill," said Craghead, "but when I say we are delighted I mean the word in its descriptive sense, rather than its conventional non-sense."

"Oh, thank you," replied Mrs. Graybill, looking about the den. "This is an unfavorable-looking place for conversationalists. And I may as well explain about the condition of this house," she went on. "Papa is reverting to type, that's all."

"Ah, yes!" replied Craghead promptly. "I see."

"No, you don't," protested Mrs. Graybill, "though it's polite to say so. When I say reverting to type, I don't mean printing or anything like that. He's going back to the ways of his youth, and the ways of his progenitors. I dare say we shall all tend to the same at his age. Don't you think so, Mr. Carson?"

Theodore hubbly answered that he had never thought of it. Craghead quoted the melancholy Jacques on second childhood, but denied the application to Mr. Waddy.

"Oh, I don't mean that!" said Mrs. Graybill. "But papa got rich, and we imposed on him gradually a life unlike that in which he was nurtured. Now he slopes, when he can, and sets up candle-shrines with seed corn and cream-separation, with roan and barrens on the lawn, and works at any job he can find, and enjoys drawing wages more than anything except teaching calves to drink. It's cruel of

me to come and break the old eye, but it's so absurd."

"What he craves," said Craghead, "then—to coin an expression—more slugs for mine!"

"Supper," said she smiling, "will be served very soon."

The long dining room was gloomy with decayed gentility—black beams, dark window-casing, and a broad piano-rail bearing wrenches, dividers, calipers, and buckets of eggs labelled as to breeds and dates. During the meal Craghead came out amazingly in his encounter with Mrs. Graybill, to whom, it seemed to Theodore, he was making stolen love.

"There's no catch in it," said Mr. Waddy to Carson, "as soon as it's public, everybody'll build you. Lots business on riches."

"Oh, but the patents, Mr. Waddy!" cried Craghead. "You forget the patents!"

"They expire in a few years," said Mr. Waddy, "as? then where are jobs? Lord, now, that I made my money as—here's a circular clock."

"Mr. Waddy," said Craghead, "this matter of securing exclusive control of the art's a part of my plan. It is one of my specialties. The law affords ample justification for the assurance, which I here and now give you, that that will be attended to. Our present task lies with the uncompleted second down by the shore of the blue gull—to get the machine made, and start business—"

Carson was amazed, for he would have sworn that Craghead had never thought of any monopoly, except the patents, yet here he was assuring Mr. Waddy of exclusive artificial dominion. Mr. Waddy granted as if highly impressed, as, no doubt, he was.

"How long will it take you," said he, "to kind of dress up your plan for circles' the control of the art—legally?"

"Oh, a very brief time!" said Craghead. "I have formulated a fine last literary in my apartments, so the consultation of authorities will be easy, but—"

"Well," interrupted Mr. Waddy, "I can can have that done by the time Mr. Carson can go where his machine is, put it in shape, an' fly back, it'll do. When he lights in the front yard, an' you bring me a good last good monopoly, I'll go in with you. What say?"

"Done!" cried Craghead. "Get your order!"

Theodore was troubling with the fear that they were throwing away their chance in reckless and impossible undertakings. Mrs.

Craighead saw him give a jerk and swallow hard as if choking, and his eyes grew soft.

"Believe me, I call it a bargain," said Theodore, "I should like a word with Mr. Craighead, if you will excuse me."

"Certainly," said she. "I should no moment casual conversation."

Craighead faced Carson inquiringly, as they stood themselves alone in the hall.

"Something rising in your throat?" he queried. "First forming in your back? No yellow stripe up your back, is there? Come, let's stand in and give him the guff."

"I wish to explain," said Theodore, "that I—I can't pay the charges on the motor. I can't get them down to the beach. So how can we accept Mr. Waddy's offer?"

"Gad, Carson!" exclaimed Craighead, "I'm glad you told me in private, instead of disclosing our important details to Mr. Waddy— But have no fear; you carry Carson and his baggage. I have the funds for the motor." He drew from his pocket a roll of bills, the most one of rather startling magnitude. "Five," said he. "Damage, actual and exemplary. I've settled the case of Carson vs. The Statute of Anne. Fine it, we have a motion picture."

"What do you mean?" asked Carson.

"I mean," said Craighead, "that the roll of tainted money is our last of the campaign. We sell that I would like plans."

"But I can't allow that," cried Theodore.

"It's already allowed," answered Craighead, with an air of perfect insurance. "Come, follow me, we can't begin with the rainbow policy of subsidizing the sources of our supplies. We can afford a college loan, and that—that you doing?"

Carson was crumpling the bills into his pocket. "Going back to Mr. Waddy," said he. "Come on!"

"Here, wait, sir!" said Craighead, his hand to his forehead. "But I warn you, Carson, that his broken-down ahead and on both legs, and that Craighead's the only pilot known these waters. But here's with you, if it's to Darn' fore."

"Mr. Waddy," said Theodore, shifting up to him and looking him in the face "before accepting your offer, there are some financial arrangements to be made. It may be some week—"

"He'll not have a nickel more left need," said Mr. Waddy. "I know how a gen'tly is with these here gnomes—"

Theodore grasped the old man's hands, his

face flushed with joy. "I accept your advances with pleasure," said he, "and within short days I shall be here with the motor."

As they took their departure Miss Graybill drew them aside for a private conference. "Mr. Carson," said she, "do you know that paper is a dreadfully good business man?"

"I am quite sure of it," said Theodore.

"Do you think that you—and Mr. Craighead—are quite able to cope with him where business is business?"

"Fear not!" said Craighead. "Colonel Carson has an adviser in me."

Mrs. Graybill laughed merrily. "I had that in mind," said she. "It believes in you, Mr. Carson. I believe in your machine. And I believe fully in you and his business ability."

"Mrs. Graybill," said Theodore, "we can do no better, in these days of big business, than to trust to a man who has the honor to be your father."

"That was a great hit you made with the dear princess," said Craighead, as they went to their room. "You're a wonder, Sir Theodore. I didn't think you had it in you. Happened if you haven't got me half hypnotized into the belief that you have some sort of victory flying machines down there? Why, we'll make a killing here that will put the best trust in second place. And something tells me that Mrs. Graybill will be on a—my heart is my weak point. She's touched it. Ah, the ladies, the ladies! They're a specialty of mine."

"I should say," said Theodore, "that you had better make a specialty of your plan for a monopoly of aerial navigation. I had no idea that you knew any such secret."

"No more had I, son," said Craighead. "But think how mean and parsimonious it would have been to refuse a proposal at the psychological moment. Fudge!"

"But you told Mr. Waddy—"

"That it is a specialty of mine," supplied Craighead. "Certainly. I wanted to keep the psychic fluid flowing. While you are on your way to the money or less mythical spot where your fabulous air-ship does or does not exist, I'll take a few minutes some day and figure it out. Don't worry about the monopoly and of the deal. That's mine devotion and in derogation of the common good, and therefore you. But can't you get to being both actualities. Be calm about me, old woman, and look to yourself."

After retiring, they sat on the exchanging



MR. WARDY OPENED THE LOCK OF A SMALL CAMERON HOUSE AND THERE
IN A DOUBLE HANDFUL, OF GOLD COIN

remarks and suggestions across the dark room.

"Well, about that money," said Carson. "I must return it to Doctor Water-john, Craighoad. You won't misunderstand me, will you?"

"Not in the least," replied Craighoad deeply. "Improving convenience, and all that sort. Cut over it to you get richer, you know."

"I shouldn't much object," said Carson, "to your making a fair bit out of it, for they really confined me here——"

"I allowed myself a fee of fifty percent," said Craighoad. "But let me sleep, gentle knight. I would have done of Carson's."

THE INLETION OF "VULVE EXPANSION"

Reluctant to the very core of an unadorned bath in his master-dip of the air, Theodore left the galling of reality as he walked westward from the station toward dilapidated Carson's Landing. While memorably computing everything relating to the account, allowing for errors and providing currency for the "margin of safety", while certain as repayment could make here that it would fail his promise to Mr. Waddy, even in his engineering he had been a visionary, unacquainted with the world and its "margin of safety" based on a stamp he sought mental adjustment before entering the stream.

The sun shone down with April warmth on the red soil, the Bermuda grass, out of the fields, the blossoming sloughs of the old house. Blue with magic was the clump of high grass across the clearing—the haze and dream of an Arkansas spring. The wood-pickers wore feathers of flame from tree to tree; the tall Spanish bayonet—wood like a row of sailing-masts—in the marsh the black-moss touched every angle of the fence with fire; the clamber in the corners of the paler blacked faintly pink. The whole familiar scene, so peaceful so intimate as one with the irreconcilable past, added that exuberant Southern haze of restoring illusion, of alternating reality and relaxation in dreamland the incredible Slavers Incubator, Mr. Craighoad, Mr. Waddy, his "reversion to type," and the great "Carson Craighoad Aeronaut Corporation."

Mr. Waddy's money, and Mr. Craighoad's telegrams saved the day for the real. The former was actual currency, and risk conforming to his pocket. The latter proved

the objectivity of Craighoad—and if Craighoad turned out to be substantial anything might be believed.

The first three yellow dispatches had come in one delivery at Nashville, addressed to "Theodore Carson, the Hesperian Engineer and Thaumaturge, Care Conductor Train, 73."

"Yield not to temptation, fear, or evil feet," the first read. "Your Uncle Fuller is at the helm!" This was signed "The Great Uncalled." The second, signed "Craighoad the Legal Woodhead," ran, "There is no fear, monopoly is as clear in the air as on the land."

"An old Broom," ran the more mysterious next, "albeit minus one or two dog's eared, unwhimsical scraps of chain. He joins the whirling to our car, and sweeps the heading slits." This was signed "Dandy Jim of Caroline Graybill." The fourth, delivered at Birmingham, and addressed to "General Theodore Carson, M. A." ("Monopolist of the Air"), came a brief transcript from "Kansas" and was signed "D. J. of C." The last had come at Bay Minette, and was too astonishing to be explained. "Caroline's dad," it read, "falls dead in an evening of Broom ideas. Now absolute truth, and rises to it as per lifelong custom. Formed to-day Universal Nitrate and Air-Products Company—Laws of West Virginia. Greatly encouraged. Almost convinced to belief in all, but am cautiously suspending judgment. Will have Chicago surrounded by time you mean. Go out to construct first line of circumvallation about Chicago New York. Waddy doubtless coming copious. Losing faith in you as concrete reality. Have you any second? Answer "Yes" or "No" at once."

What could be meant by "an old Broom"? The old copy of "Broom's Legal Maxims" in Craighoad's "library" was indeed minus a cover and dog's eared, but how this Broom could, even in metaphor, join the whirling to our car and sweep the heading slits, Carson could not guess. Mr. Waddy's demand for aeronautical monopoly was being complied with to Mr. Craighoad's mind, and the last telegram seemed to imply that that baffling disaster had been concerned. Was "falling dead" might mean much or little, but the "doubtless coming copious" was eloquent of faith. And what in the name of all the gods at once could "Universal Nitrate and Air-Products Company" mean in an aerial navigation deal? On those mysterious expressions about "surrounding" Chicago and Greater New York?

Well! Aunt Chloe was in there shuffling about, wondering where he might be—and here he was, looking so spectral and un-expected. With the common impulse to secret approach Theodore walked on circled between the Spanish tapestries and a number line of red velvet, climbed the end of the veranda, scouted into the broad hall and up to his room, into which he stepped quickly, breathing a little hard. He opened the closet for a change of clothes, and started back in wonderment quite as paralyzing as horror, for his clothes were gone, and there stood a huge trunk with its lid back, its jaws full of silken hose, lace, gloves, handkerchiefs, and openwork things of mystery and terror. On the hooks were hung, many others quite as awful—frilled and ruffled and ruffled and plumed garments; silks, dainties, cashmere, flanne, cottons, and soft light woollen—filling his closet, spread against the wall for weeks seasons connected with keeping them in shape; and protruding from the trunk were more clothes, while in corners of the room were more trunks.

To make sure that he was in his own house, and not a pretense of the shrine of some divinity of lace and openwork, he looked from the window. Yes, this was Carson's Landing. The gulls hanging from the tall poles, the masts chattering from them, the china-toss full of blossoms like blue blossoms, humming with bees and stirred incessantly by crimson bee-hands, all these he knew. But this, this coast? With its luring, arrive a lay there like a mold awaiting the casting of a Phidias Pacha. He picked up the fragment garment with the pink ribbon edging it, and looked at it with something of the terror of Chremides in the shrine of Artemis. He had forgotten the marvel of their presence in that of the things themselves—for he was passionately absorbed in engineering hermit.

A light step without, and he flew to a statue of panic and terror and paralysis. Some one entered, his heart bounded, and then stood still, for it was Pacha of the dunes, Shapiro's niece, Virginia, entering jauntily, mockingly like a real woman taking possession of his bedroom on her own. She had a voluptuously derived smile on her lips, and held in her hands a spray of buck-berry blossoms, which she put in her mouth, and then stuck in a vase by the old mirror. She took off the memorable red hat, examined her dainty stockings for dirt or lace, and did a dozen things to make one tremble and

fear the fate of Tom of Coventry. Every time she looked her way Theodore quaked more more than at her alarming actions in ignorance of his presence. If she would only go away! Who was she home? If not the home? If he could only slip out! What was she going to do now?

She had opened the window as it drew on by the heat. Sitting down with her profile to him, she turned her old spine view-side; and then, as if still oppressed by the heat, she stopped in the mirror, unspined the bosom at her throat, and began unhooking back for the bosom of her dress. Providential instinct admonished Theodore that it was time for action.

"Pacha!" he murmured.

With a little woman she turned, marguerite Carson as he emerged from the closet, and his pale face, turned back, her hand on her breast and a quick palpitation in the V of her gown, like the heart of a scared rabbit. Yet she was the less excited of the two. Her alarm ceased with her recognition of him, for this boy had shown himself once to be trusted. The sense of escape and secret which she had associated with him from their first curious meeting at the railroad station in the dunes returned.

"My rabbit!" said she, in a half whisper. "Oh, I'm so glad you aren't dashed in pieces! I've seen you falling, falling, falling in my dreams, and never sighing! But evidently you did!"

"Yes," said he, "quite safe! But how came you here?"

"Oh, I love him!" said she.

"You—loving—him?" repeated Theodore. "Him? You—you love him?"

"Yes," said she earnestly. "With my uncle I couldn't endure the Shagnas and Schenberg any longer. Why, the way they did drive people to crime! And if you did anything it was open war with the officers, and not by words as Shagnas and Schenberg do. I told them so to their teeth—talk, you ought to witness, confession. And I couldn't bear Aunt Mame any more"—here she choked triumphantly—"though everybody will say I'm aggressive, and all that. And General Carson's family are all my relatives in the world, except the Shagnas. And this is their plantation. My uncle that I never saw lives here, and I came so far. I hope he won't hate me. I'd rather not have to ask him to shelter a rabbit the very first thing; and so I hope you aren't pursued. But if you are, I'll help you."

Theodore relied back against the wall, drew his hands across his eyes, and looked again. She seemed to be there still, rather nearer than before, hands clasped in adorable anxiety, distant pity in her eyes.

"I am in no danger," said he. "Pardon me for intruding here. It was by mistake. Permit me to ask the better of an interview at a more convenient time and place."

Mr. Carson, of Carson's Landing, the host of the Carson, now spoke, with some approach to manner and form as by tradition required.

"Oh, I'm so glad you are—an uncle!" she cried. "I want you to stay in bunkroom."

"Thank you," he returned. "I shall return at an hour!" This was nearer to the conventional than anything yet. She gathered her gown about her throat, looked about at the room, and blushed.

"Perhaps," she said, "if you really aren't afraid of being caught you ought to go away now—to the parlor, I mean!"

Carson raised his eyes, bowed gravely, and walked toward the door.

"And," said she, blushing still more redly, "if you are quite sure you don't mind, please leave me—my—my—"

Theodore looked down at his hand, now with unspeakable horror that he had held it in during the whole collapse the Psyche maid, dropped it hastily, and rushed from the room in an agony of mind quite out of proportion to the real damage done.

AT THE MARCH OF VARIETY

"Of course, it's a shock," said Miss Sumner, "to find you—"

"I am sorry," said Theodore, "to have shocked you. I—"

"With, now!" said Miss Sumner. "Try to supply clothes and—those things. I ought to find you so—"

"So unsuitable, so lacking in the qualities of—"

"You're gradually getting closer to it," commented Virginia. "Our danger here, where there is nobody hanging about to cut off misgivings—no, not that—to—"

"To slough and define the shock," suggested the engineer.

"The very word," said she. "Ugly, ugly, you're clever—now in a while—"

"Thank you, Miss Virginia. I—"

"Don't interrupt, please. Our danger here in the wilderness is that of not catching the

shades of expressions, the seasons; and that we'll misunderstand and fight and pull hair needlessly. Doesn't that cover the case?"

"While a very concise statement of some of the dangers," said he, "I don't think it does, quite. But was mine saying that I lack some quality. Please go on."

"The quality of neighborhood," said she. "You don't cruise the side. I suppose my image of a charming young rubber—for you are not bad looking, you know."

Theodore blushed.

"Powers, and priggish, and those things are so incompatible with one's only surviving live-weatherable stock," said Virginia.

"In the 'States in the Wood,'" said Theodore, "the stock was quite that sort."

"I thought you were going to make another application," said she. "The odd thing with us is that you seem a babe in the wood, more than an uncle, and I the other."

"I scarcely think—"

"Oh, I know you're scoundrel," she assured him, "or you wouldn't have invented so much. But after tumbling out of that crazy helicopter at your feet, and being treated—you know what I mean—and being put to bed after that pillow, and pored about dynamite—that was quite unkind—and you carrying me home, and going north in the *Riv* and making us killy and silly—and dear—with Solberberg, until his backy old nose bled, and jumping off the ship miles high in the night and storm, and I feeling so superior, so one down to a brigand, and rather making a hero of you, and then to find you my uncle—isn't there an incongruity? Surely you can understand—"

"Perfectly," said Theodore, ignoring the frivolous things. "What I wish you to understand is how honored I am to be your grandson, even though I don't deserve it."

"Oh, but you do!" said she. "You began helping me when I tumbled down. And if you aren't a Methodistish, there's the Carson blood, isn't there?"

"There's the Carson blood," asserted Theodore solemnly. "And the trust that blood alone couldn't confer."

"And the relationship must stand in the place of yours," said Virginia. "For I can't go back to the *Shoguns*. I'm afraid they'll find me and make me—"

"You shall not go back!" cried Theodore. "Never!"

"My, my!" said Virginia. "How fierce, such! And now, let's go to—Sing!"

Yes; Theodore had fallen. Flushing the bed-chamber, in which Aunt Chloe had established Miss Saurin, he had uncovered his launch for light; but, reconsidering, had demanded of Aunt Chloe an explanation of the presence, under a statement that she lived there, of Shayer's room, "Pa'cho."

"She's come to live with us," said Aunt Chloe, assuming the chivalrous fidelity of all Southern gentlemen to their female relatives. "She's kin of us's."

"There must be some mistake," he gasped. "How can she be related to me, Chloe?"

"W'y, yo' some kin' of uncle to her," replied Aunt Chloe. "Huk monthah was a daughter to ole General Cannon. She married Lee Saurin, and died. Miss Gennie knowed about us, an' she come byah, so she had a right to, sah."

"But, Aunt Chloe, we aren't any kin to old General Cannon, are we? And I'm no uncle to this young lady, am I?"

Aunt Chloe drew herself up in indignation. "I reckon yo' paw trail yo' out good, ef he lyah yo' say that," said she. "Hev Ah been wuckin' fah yo' whine all these yuh? Ye' sho' so dis as uncle. Ye' paw knowed he was a Cannon. Does talk to me?"

"What have you told her about this relationship?" said Theodore.

"She does knowed all erbout it," said Aunt Chloe.

"Did she know how father got the plantation after the old general died, and how nobody thinks we are any kin to him, and—"

"Who yo' mean?" queried Aunt Chloe. "Ah reckon we some kin, or on' name wouldn't be Cannon, would it? Ah tek the most kinah in, as a Cannon, an' if ye'd held hah in yo' whine, an' squunched hah nose, I reckon yo' wouldn't be bringin' up these herry arguments."

Ah, how close a shot did Aunt Chloe make when she used this argument! If he could only have held her in his arms! But she would think of him as a chadigger! she must. If he had but gone more like a soldier, instead of prancing all the time at servants and the like! And now he was irretrievably at a disadvantage by his misbehavior in the bedroom. Nevertheless he sent Aunt Chloe to inform Miss Saurin that the robbery of the South Beach, and the steamway of the Ace, was no other than the man with whom, in a touching confidence in the old chivalry which regards an unprotected woman-relative

as a sacred charge and love the obligation of gratitude on the man rendering the service, she had come to live.

Uncle Theodore was stately, conventional, and, with due allowance for sturdy bluntness when Miss Virginia created a little giggle, promptly asseverated in her naughtiness, quite grand in his demeanor at luncheon. He formally kissed Virginia's hand, yielded to the temptation, and sat down calmly upon the deception, oblivious of the vast consequences involved. She trusted him, she made claims upon him; and she was not to be pained by explanations. He was only a boy, you know.

"I have the honor," said he, "to drink your health—the health of the jewel and the hope of the Carson family."

She rose, took both his hands, and kissed him on the forehead. There were tears in her eyes. "Thank you, Uncle Theodore," said she, and went out slowly, without looking at him.

He stood there, quite motionless, until he heard her walking about in the upper hall. He was wrong, of course; but there were qualifying circumstances. The situation almost immediately, however, approached the impossible. In the first place, Theodore had expected to make only a day's halt and then push on, get his motor, go to the South Beach, where Captain Harrod must be waiting at his long absence, mend his engines and fly north, where Craighood was organizing companies at a rate that would have dashed Cannon had he not been already dashed. The first day he went orders for the shipment of the motor—and began to provide better equipment for the house. He engaged as a companion for Miss Saurin an elderly widow, Mrs. Stott, who was addicted to the writing of annuary poems. Virginia's opinion of her new uncle's worldly wisdom rose at this provision for chaperonnage; but she gave him too much credit. He merely thought of Virginia's becoming lonely.

Every morning opened new avenues of service. They began reading a book—and they had to finish it. She was fond of fishing. She wanted to explore the upper reaches of the river; and they spent long days on the steers. A letter from Harrod, proving that the news of his return had reached the cabin in the clouds, lay on the old easel—none moving. Theodore inserted a paper-knife in the envelope, half cut it open—and

—and Virginia's dress glimmering outside. The half-opened letter fell to the desk, and he leaped out on the veranda.

"Morning, uncle," said Virginia. "Have you slept well?"

"Fine!"

"You don't look it," said she. "Your eyes look dull. You devote too much time to business while your family sleeps, don't you?"

Theodore thought of the unopened letter, the unanswered telegram, the neglected business, Mr. Waddy's money, the uncompleted account, the sleepless nights tormented by—not business, at all, not business! Decidedly not!

"I slept too soundly," said he. "What's the program for to-day?"

She wanted some magnolia blossoms. Theodore thought there might be some down about Wick's Bay, where they came early.

"Put on your hat," said he. "Have Chloe put up lunchbox, and we'll go down."

"Done!" cried she. "You best of uncle! Let's to breakfast! Can't we catch a speckled trout?"

"We ought to get all we want," said Theodore.

"And cook him over a fire?"

"Certainly!" said Theodore. "And well-shelled crabs—we'll have a great day!"

At a ferry on route Virginia kissed a little girl and called her "sweetheart." Virginia wanted to see some young woodpeckers, and almost cried when the one Theodore got out would not go back into the nest, but flattered away crying pitifully. Virginia encountered a "spade-in" adder" ten inches long, and ran to Theodore, gathering up her skirts in terror, and he calmed and comforted her on a high and fatherly level.

That was the maddest thing. Everything was maddest, but crisis and explosion lay in the fact that while keeping her within reach he had pulled the saw to reach her wildly that while their relations allowed affection they shut out love. This he gave him revelations mostly hidden from lovers, and whispered to fathers, brothers, and husbands only; but he was cut off from the embowments of his work, even. He was like a tiger-cub taking his mother's hand and feeling the jungle-banger knot. All that day the rub had been on the very verge of discovering somebody. It was appalling. All unconscious of her pitiful state, she took his arm under the screening veil of civility,

told him what a delightful day she had had, and squeezed his arm while she said it.

Something may have warned her that this was a ticklish thing with so young and inexperienced an uncle, for she dropped his arm and ran gaily toward the house, looking back and stepping lightly like a kid—when she tripped in a hollow and fell in a heap on the Bermuda grass. Theodore leaped for her with her ankle gripped in his hands, and her lips tight to hold back a cry. A hurried question, a chance reply cut in two by a twinge of pain, and he picked her up. She threw her arms about his neck to ease the burden. Alas! it made it heavier! The force of his embrace did the ankle no good, and nearly crushed poor Virginia. The color rose slowly to her brow, as he set her down on the veranda and stood over her, breathing hard. She rose on the sound foot and tried the other carefully.

"It isn't bad at all," said she. "I can walk on it." Taking off the shoe, she held the little foot in her hand, examining the ankle critically. "Do you think it's swelling?" she asked.

Theodore investigatively pressed on the shapely ankle, and rose to his feet. "I don't know," said he. "I—Virginia?"

He had seized her hand, and was looking at her with none of the impersonality of the surgeon or physician. She did not take her hand away. He dropped it, and ran toward the river. It was very rude; yet she harbored no bitterness. She had Aunt Chloe bandage her foot, went to her room, and commended with her magnolia blossoms, pressing them to her cheek and lips. She called them "Poor dear! Poor dear!"

Theodore was absent at dinner, without apology, and the women were in bed before he stole to his room, and lay tossing again. Desperate, he rose and went to the library, lighted a lamp, saw the unopened letter from Captain Harnady, and slouched it open as if it had been the breast of his mortal foe. It read:

I hope that you are back South. I hope you can come right soon. The engine is here for ten days. I am right close on the grade, and need sleep. The man that lost the flying thing the young lady came in is back. He is right now, Mr. Theodore, down here, too, machine. He keeps trying to go into the clouds and pull to his mouth, and now off a plane and I have to my uncle, and am along all in. That is a lot of letters and telegrams at Palmers River. Hoping this will find you ready to start tomorrow, yours truly,

CHAS. H. HARRIS

Theodore struck himself on the breast, and started to his feet, determined to live to his work and from the dangers of his loneliness. Trembling with excitement, he unrolled a note to Virginia. Worse at the calm, messages at the beach, meant danger and disaster if he neglected his task longer, unless if he typed on with temptations. He told Chloë through her door that he had been called away, and that she must explain to the ladies. He hastily packed a bag, ran down and unmoored the launch, and fled down the river at a speed made foolhardy by the darkness. Emerging into Mobile Bay, he stood toward Palmetto Beach, his eyes straight before him, staring with automatic accuracy. Only one thing seemed him from his trance, a white object lying on the gambrel, which he picked up and placed in his note-book—the dropped petal of a magnolia bloom.

MR. WINDER RECEIVES A COMMAND

Captain Harrod, dignified, bareheaded, soft voiced, unkempt, kept his lonely vigil on the white straight ridge of beach between Fort Morgan and Perdido Bay. All was of sand, vivid. The sand-colored sandpipers slipped across the beach before the breeze; pellets in water beach-gray deliberately drowned the roving cankers lurking on the outer sand-bar, porpoises leaped and spouted in terror when caught in the receding tide among the sandy shallows near the shore; and once in a while an evil-eyed shark glomed cruelly (like a spot of darker sand with cold little eyes) from the green water just out of reach of the fisherman's gig. To the unfettered man seventy years hence with such things, however, they was uninteresting.

So you may understand why Captain Harrod, ignoring landscape and seascapes, devoted himself to the study of tracks of all sorts—tracks of loons examining the beach for turtle's eggs, months ahead of time; tail-marks of opossums and raccoons prowling about for crabs, mice, and birds' eggs; foot-marks of the wild hogs, roving over the marsh under the scrub oaks; "tracks" of alligators, made in nightly journeys into the freshwater lakes and their deep holes in the pools among the dunes; long scratchy claw-scars of the herons from early-morning misings on the beach; tracks of men going up and down the sparsely traveled highway of

the strand, and the footprints of one in particular, who lurked about and seemed to be thinking of the cabin and its inmates. For Harrod knew the language of sand. He knew several things that this man might be—a diverter from the fleet, though such would have been likely to be described by the corporation's guard in the scouting air-ship, and should have been noted by the dense ham-mocks of Ben Sawyer. Or it might be some one connected with the secret service.

This latter hypothesis should, of course, have given the captain no uneasiness. He was an exemplary fisherman, with boat on shore and "trawlers" drying on their stakes, fishing normally as fine days for redfish, Spanish mackerel, and pompano. This obvious establishment had no connection with the world gone through fish—as any revenue officer should have known. And yet—some day a ship on monster track, a blunt nose from the water out at about the five-fathom contour line, opened a rectangular mouth, and flicked a square red tongue like an angry snake, and Captain Harrod, on the highest dune, opened a brilliant red handkerchief with a Choctaw pattern, whereupon it sank beneath the horse, and came back the pompano and sharks might say where it went. What took place that night was concealed by darkness. If Captain Harrod was busy carrying packages ashore next morning, he came by them honestly, no doubt.

An examination of popular novels and periodicals of the time prior to the achievement by man of directed flight will be rewarded by a realization of prophecy gone wrong as to the influence on smuggling of aerial navigation. It meant long free trade, the prophets said. Ships occupying the air could land their cargoes anywhere, no entry was being a potential part of entry. Yet the air-ship gave the custom-house people an infinitely small amount of trouble. Air-ships were so conspicuous, their loads were necessarily so light, the system of reporting them by wireless from Canada, Mexico, and the islands was so efficient, the living and revenue regulations were so perfect, the risk of loss was so great, the perils of transoceanic flights were so prohibitive, and the competition between nations was so hearty, that smuggling had little and from astronomical sources, such as it was.

Very unexpectedly it was the submarine that drove the "revenue" wild and filled the statute books with Draconian regula-

room. No trade ever grew dumber. The submarines were shady characters, but they had pretensions to legitimate trades, like other dubious individuals, and it was their business to be lost to sight for long periods of time. The storm which kept us harbor the scouts of the law offered opportunity to the submarines. The hatch-like dove beneath the tempest, rose on some lonely coast like this, by appointment with some Captain Harrod sitting like a bewhiskered lot of wreckage on the dunes. Driven to open friendships by distress, some of the derelict craft unbraced open privacy, instead to the sea a flavor of the seventeenth century, and waited for an opella. Maintaining relations with such sea-monsters was a mighty foolish thing to be found out in. Hence, perhaps, Captain Harrod's profound interest in tracks, his nervousness at the rustling of the red-brown pines under the scrub, his search of the thickets, in such cases, until he found his feathered friends or established the absence of an enemy.

It was then that he found Winner. The sea-monster's visit had occurred the day before, and the captain, who had slept late, was taking a stroll to see whether the rain and wind had quite obliterated all traces of a landing he knew of. Just over the first hillback he heard one of those startling rustlings in the leaves, with no power's whistle to explain it. He began peering into the thicket, with a stricture gripping his throat, and trod on Winner's head as he slept. The inventor struggled forth with a wild yell, and began running. Captain Harrod, another old man of the sea, leaped upon his back, bore him to the ground, and sat on him, paralyzing. Winner looked up at him in abject terror.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" cried he. "I know you! I know you!"

Captain Harrod was pumled, but relieved to note that the man did not act like an officer. In making the arrest the captain had acted on impulse, and was glad that he had caught no "revenger." The man was quite as clearly not a deserter. His white, his rolling eyes, his scraps of nonsense, all aroused doubts as to his sanity.

"You're one of 'em!" growled Winner, pounding his head on the sand. "Let me up! You and Shayne and Silberberg and the pet—all linked in together to rob me—of my helicopter! You've got it hid here. You've scared me! Kill me if you want to! Let me up!"

Captain Harrod slowly released him, and both rose, facing each other.

"Ah'm right sorry, sah," said the captain, "that Ah tread on yo' head. Ah didn't see yo', sah!"

Winner approached the captain, took him by the sleeve, looked about cunningly, and whispered in Harrod's ear. "Tell me where my helicopter is!" said he wheedlingly. "It'll be all right, if you do. And I'll make you rich!"

"Oh!" said the Silverman. "Yo' the flyer-machine man, sah? It fetched awhile an' went out to sea, yo' know, sah."

"I put every cent I had in it," said Winner. "It was worth a million! Give it to me!"

This argument lasted days and weeks, for Winner soon saw that the Silverman's hospitality would not permit the driving away of a poor wrecked being such as he seemed to be. So his sleeping-bag was placed on the veranda, and Winner wheeled and glared, and whenever detected in any attempt to enter the shed he had the severest sort of a paragon, demanded his helicopter back, stood at Shayne, and refused to eat for fear of being poisoned.

Such was the state of things when Carson appeared at the cabin one day, white and determined looking, crossed a pocketful of letters and telegrams, and said with no salutation,

"Where are those engines?"

"In the shed, sah," replied the captain.

"Ah done unpacked 'em, sah."

Carson unlocked and opened the door from the cabin to the shed, let in light through a hatch in the roof, and for two hours studied the engines, his eyes lighting from time to time with a serious half-smile. Four powerful fifty-horse-power, eight-cylinder motors they were, and so light that he picked them up with ease. Down the long shed a huge thing like a great dragon-fly lay in its cradle, with cheap launch-motors in the engine-pit for experimental purposes. Therefore called the captain to test them out. Once more on the veranda, he noted the sleeping-bag stretched from columns to columns.

"What's that?" he asked.

"That's what the crazy man sleeps in," replied the captain.

Carson examined it with care, looked at the pneumatic mattress, saw the completeness and good condition of the outfit, and turned grimmer of face than ever. "Who turned it inside out in a hurry?" he queried.

"He did, sah," said the captain.

"Did he ever do that before?"

"Alike does it, sah."

"What's that?" asked Theodore, picking something up.

"Thing he lays out' his face, sah, to land off the mud flin. Had it out' his face when I found him, sah."

"Where was that?" asked Carson.

The captain explained the discovery of Winner and the preceding mystery of his marks.

"When did you first see the tracks?" asked Carson.

"Night soon after' yo' went north, sah," answered the captain.

"Kept out of sight and made no outcry about the heliograph until you looked him out of the palmation?" went on Carson.

"Yes, sah," replied the witness.

"Always careful to protect his face when he sleeps?"

"Yes, sah."

"Good appetite?"

"Yes, sah, he ate' his."

"Tried to get into the shed with the screw?"

"All the while, sah," replied the captain.

"But when he got the plank off, the devil sent drive him out with hot bolts, he said, sah, so he didn't go in."

Carson laughed uncomprehendingly. "Where is this systematic lunatic?" he inquired.

"That's how a-comin' over' the ridge, that," replied the captain. "He spends a heap o' time lookin' after' his lost clock-muskey."

Murmuring to himself and shaking his feet at vacancy, Winner passed, on seeing Carson, with a start of very minor guilt and embarrassment, violating all the conventions of lunacy. Theodore studied him with narrowed eyes, as he began making passes in the air, as if in the reaction of evil spirits or carrying out a physical-culture system.

"Another one!" he muttered. "All the devils'll be here soon, and then—and then—ha, ha, ha!"

"Stop that!" For some reason the young man was furious where the captain had been pitiful. "Take this stuff of yours," said Carson, "and get out of this! Understand?"

Winner took down the sleeping-bag, hunched it up with the deflated mattress, and threw it down, rolling his eyes, and opening and shutting his hands. "You're all killed in together!" he wailed, sitting on a bench, and

feebly pounding his head against the column. "You're the head don't! You pulled her down by the pants! You stole her! Give me my million or give her back!"

Carson took him by the throat, choked him purple, and banged his head against the post until the whining became a real outcry of pain. "Like rats live," said Carson. "And pounding cars pounding. Clear out, now!"

Winner moved away slowly, but turned at a safe distance, his eyes blazing. "I'll fix you, you young fool!" he snarled. "You think you're an engineer. I'll show you."

"Go!" said Carson. "Before I fix you so you can't, you snaker!"

Captain Harrod stood transfixed at this terrible breach of hospitality on Theodore's part, puzzled by Winner's sudden sanity as he passed between the dunes, ankle-deep in sand, and addressed Carson.

"I'll fix you, good and plenty!" he said. "No man can choke and pound me, and live."

For the first time Carson's face relaxed into a real smile. "It's been a great thing for you," he flung at the man in the sand. "See how clear your mind is!"

"And you'll never get that mechanical death during needs of years to it," went on Winner. "It'll turn turtle in the first puff. And if it live, you'll get competition, you—"

Carson leaped from the veranda, but Captain Harrod was between them.

"Don't kill him, sah!" he exclaimed. "He may not be quite right yet!"

"You old fool!" answered Winner. "You old smuggling fool! You'll get yours, too!"

He disappeared over the hill-top, as a great revolution of boiling passed through the old man's being. He felt wronged. Winner suddenly became an enemy, capable of infinite harm.

"Miser! Theodo!" said he, in low, slow tones. "Ah have just altogether done lost confidence in that man. He's that not straight, Mizer! Theodo!"

Carson had not comprehended Winner's allusion to smuggling. In a belated frenzy of resolution, energized like a fully charged battery, he donned his working-clothes and began the installation of the new engine, which were to make good his promises to himself, to Comhead and Waddy, and to a world which had long awaited the command of the air—now to add the name of Theodore Carson to the list headed by Turbine. & Son.

It was cruel—for Theodore, for Crayhead and Waddy, and for the world. Love! A mere illusion!

Wanner walked toward Fort Morgan, his teeth set, his face striking vicious blows at nothing, nature loosing that he had ever been before. He hated Carson most violently now, instead of tenderly and anxiously as before. His sensitive genius was greater and respectable, but he was insanely jealous and refused to admit the correctness of anyone's ideas as to anything pertaining to aviation. And yet the great dragonfly in the shell had impressed him. It was so work-manlike, so trim, so poised, and the great wing-surfaces beating the air in sections, while the wing itself was stationary, were eloquent of power for lifting and driving. He was impressed and immensely depressed.

He had been so sanguine of his helicopter. With Shapere's money to build another and better one he would conquer fame! And to have this young sprout, who had batted in, got Shapere away from him, gone north on the same air-ship with him, and come back, with money for the engines, choosing a better man and a better engineer than himself, and pounding his head, the young beard? He would kill him, in some slow, horrible way, if he waited until he was a hundred years old!

Wanner's burning heat was such that he scarcely felt the cool breeze that rolled in vast volumes of lashing white water, and piled huge drifts of dry leaves on the white beach. He plodded along toward the crossing to the lagoon, the rear of the ocean in his ears and the great and staid of vengeance in his heart, thinking of Carson's arrest. How could he grant a crash he kept from over-running? It was too big to be balanced by feeling, like a bicycle or a Wright machine. It would turn turtle, he would bet on that.

"I'd give a hundred dollars to see it," snarled Wanner. "To see him fall out of the cool thing, breaking his bones."

But that mysterious glass globe in the center of the crash, so many little gyroscopes beautifully mounted to man in terror! This was the mystery to Wanner. It looked like a sound, compact, clear brain. And yet those light gyroscopes—set in pairs like the right and left halves of the brain—were too light to hold the great arched stable in the air.

"If they were heavy enough to balance her she couldn't lift the weight. What are they

for? Their density is that glass globe. I wish I'd smashed it!"

He struck off north now, among the huge ancient oaks, the rosemary, and the bastard spruce. His trail ran to the left of a black pool, winged by tadpoles as by falling rain, but late turned him to the right, past a clump of palmettos, the tall backbony bushes hushing him with fragrant blossoms. He stooped to pass under them, poised, and let the thoughts return without a waste to their position. Under the bushes lay the light portable, telescope "go-down" of a submarine and under it a man.

Wanner smiled and started forward, poised, retreated out of sight, and stood as if debating some abstract problem, fished as if recalled with slow, hurried waves to the lagoon, drew a boat from concealment, and rowed rapidly over to a hotel, had a meal off on the shore there.

At the desk of the hotel, Wanner got paper, envelopes, and a list of copying carbon, sat down and wrote a letter, which he addressed to himself, in care of the chief of police of Mobile, to be turned over to the collector of the post, and by him opened if not called for by a certain date. He carefully copied the address of the original upon the envelope of the carbon copy, took three loath to the clerk, handed him a cigar, and asked him as a favor to certify on the back of the copy that he, the clerk, had personally placed in the mail the original, addressed precisely as was the copy.

"Don't know what your game is, old man," said the clerk, "but I hope you get away with it all right."

Wanner rowed straight back and made his way to the boat under the bushes. The man was sitting up now, smoking. Wanner walked into camp quietly.

"Hello, Fawcett," said he. "Ain't you pretty near lost?"

Fawcett, who had started and dropped his hand to his hip, changed his attitude and shook hands cordially. "No," said he, "but you are, I should think. Where'd you drop from?"

"You're ashore at a bad time," said Wanner. "Where's the *Strickland*?"

"Oh," replied Fawcett, "I'm not on her any longer."

"Fanny just brought away her boat," said Wanner. "And her captain, too?"

This latter remark was evoked by the arrival of a third party, who came lurching and dropped to the ground.

"Hello, Warner," said he.

"Hello, Captain Reagan," replied Warner.

"Can you give me a smack?"

"Sure," said Reagan. "Let's sit, Ferville. I've got a gruback for dinner."

"Which way you going, Warner?" loudly asked Reagan.

"I thought I'd go aboard the *Stickleback*," replied Warner.

"You did?" replied Reagan. "Well, you've got another game coming."

"You think Ferville can handle the engineer's berth?" queried Warner, with a covert snarl.

"The snarl don't rear like it did," said Reagan. "The wind's off shore. It's quieting down. Stick up the signal, Ferville."

Ferville departed, and Reagan, sitting up, spoke in the manner of one who scans a scroll.

"Whatever it is, Warner," said he, "out with it. I am not apt to fool with."

"I want the *Stickleback* for a while," said Warner.

"What for?" asked Reagan.

"To stand off and on, do as I say, ask no questions, and tell no tales."

Fooling mystery in this demand, Reagan controlled his temper, and let the case develop. "And if this modest request is refused?" he queried.

"Why," said Warner slowly, "I may let the authorities know that instead of solving mystery the *Stickleback* is prowling around off Harold's camp."

Reagan lay gently back, this time on one arm. The other hand slid slowly to his hip pocket. He was the picture of stolid ease.

"Well," he said slowly, "what might interest them, but what is there in it?"

"Not much, maybe," said Warner. "But I'm a free-shooting citizen, and I feel I ought to tell."

"You federal fool," said Reagan, speaking over a sheet, flat automatic pistol. "You'll may have till the bugs root you out!"

Warner turned pale, and reached for the lamp; Reagan's voice stopped him.

"Hands up!" said he. "I hate to kill you, but I'll just give you time to pray."

Warner, his hands in air, and trembling like a reed, played out his hand. "There's a letter

in my pocket," said he. "Read it, and you won't shoot!"

Ferville, returning, saw and understood the tableau—Reagan on his feet cowering Warner, the inveterate delinquent, but shaming.

"Take the letter from the cur's pocket," said Reagan. "Cover him while I look at it—and pick out his grave!"

"Don't spoil the certificate," said Warner.

"Cut it!"

Reagan, after reading the endorsement, informing him that if Warner failed to claim the letter posted, it would go to the collector, read the letter itself. It was a succinct accusation of the smuggling with the names and addresses of two witnesses—imaginary—who could point out the contraband goods and testify to the facts, with Warner's identification of the *Stickleback's* crew as the criminals, in which the witnesses named would swear if confronted with J. J. Reagan, captain, and T. W. Ferville, chief engineer. The witnesses, the letter concluded, had not been informed of the identity of Ferville and Reagan.

Reagan tossed the letter to Ferville. "You get on on this," said he. "Put down your gun."

"Oh, no!" cried Warner, "I won't run." "Don't be too cocky," said Reagan, "or I'll take chances on a shot at you. D'ye hear?"

"Seems to hold high cards," said Ferville. "But if you say so, I'll—"

"How dare know," said Reagan, "that you won't peach after you get through with us?"

"If I make the play I expect to," replied Warner, "I'll be in a damned sight deeper'n you are."

"That means," said Reagan, "worse than smuggling."

"I mean," said Warner, "the only thing the law punishes worse than smuggling with a submarine."

Reagan paused a while, thinking of the delivery of that letter to the collector of the port, its exposure of the *Stickleback*, and the consequent outflow of boat and crew—all certain if Warner failed to call for it. "I didn't expect," said he, "I'd ever go that far; but I guess I'll have to serve under you, Warner. You're the captain of the *Stickleback*."

The next installment of "*Virginia of the Air-Lane*" will appear in the August issue.



THE WOMAN WHO WAS THE FIRST TO BE HUNG IN THE GAZETTE, 1871.
WOMAN WHO WAS THE FIRST TO BE HUNG IN THE GAZETTE, 1871.

—The Woman Who Was the First to Be Hung in the Gazette, 1871.

Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Leigh

SCENE: Virginia Baxter is the guest of her uncle, Finley Shayne, on his great air ship, the *Red*, which is hovering over the coast of Alabama. Below on land are Max Silberberg, the wealthy head of the Freighted Metals Company, and an aviator named Winter. A trail of Winter's own helicopter—a type of small flying machine—is to be made. The admirer of Silberberg, which, encouraged by Mrs. Shayne, he keeps upon Virginia, are most unwise to the girl. In a spirit of fun she aims herself in the net of the helicopter, and accidentally touching a lever sends herself aloft in space. After a thrilling flight through the air, the helicopter descends close to the edge of the water, the landing painter is used by two men, and Virginia tumbles out upon the sand. Her rescuers prove to be Theodore Carson, a young Seaboarder, who is at work on a new idea in flying machines, and Captain Harrod, a typical Gulf interloper. After the girl has recovered from her shock, Carson takes her to a boat in Palmetto Beach, a near-by resort. Something to the score of the midway she follows up, Shayne and Silberberg learn of Virginia's rescue from Captain Harrod, who upon being so to see Carson. The air ship lands for Carson's Landing, the young man is invited aboard, and being urged by Shayne to agree to accompany them north to discuss his invention.

Picking up Mrs. Shayne and Virginia, the air starts for Chicago. Silberberg becomes jealous of Carson and finally resorts upon the absorption of breaking off an important business deal, that Shayne put the young man off. Therefore Shayne reluctantly with Carson that his property does any Carson's, and offers him money for the rescue of Virginia. Carson indignantly launches the bank-notes from Shayne's hand, and being further insulted by Silberberg, assumes a parachute which he has taken aboard with him, and so Virginia's horror drops from the Red over the black abyss beneath. She lands safely in the grounds of Doctor Wellesworth's Seaboarder for the cure of malpractice, where he meets on cooperative terms, a lawyer named Craighood, and being engaged for another patient is finally detained and treated. When the management discards the doctor it tries to induce Carson to sign a release for all claims, but Craighood abruptly prevents this and announces himself as Carson's attorney in a damage suit.

His big secured financial backing in the person of Mr. Waddy, Coughlin's former "pugilist" Carson returns north to complete his service. At Carson's Landing he finds Virginia Baxter, who had sought refuge there thinking that as owner, of whose identity she was ignorant, was her uncle. Carson dived here until a letter from Captain Harrod informing him that Winter is trying to get at the airship calls him to the beach. Winter is unconsciously driven away, and, plotting vengeance, he secures command of a smuggling submarine for purposes that are sinister and deadly.

AN OVERGROWNLY PRESENT



VIRGINIA, left alone, was rather glad of it. Her description of the Shaynes in a fit of resentment of the insults heaped upon Theodore Carson was a cruel blow to Max Silberberg's aviator people, as well as a crisis in her own life. She had been impulsive, and needed time

for thought. Her aunt had told her plainly that her treatment of Silberberg was ridiculous of the danger with which the Shaynes had given her a home, to wit, that Virginia should have a chance for her market. If she refused to speak to the best bidder there was no use in continuing the experiment. Mrs. Shayne scarcely meant this for an ultimatum, but Virginia, on accepting it, took flight to Carson's Landing and to shelter in

the shade of the sole remaining branch of her family tree—as she supposed. She went full of confidence that she would find there a silver-haired uncle and a delicate old-lady cousin, tenderly loyal to the Carson blood and ready to resolve her.

Instead of silver hair, she found a boyish and such closely like uncle, and there was no aunt. The grandness of old General Carson, related to Theodore Carson by no chain of descent save the distant one of the original third Carson brother of hundreds of years ago and the ownership of this plantation, was readily allowed to assume kindly from the place and name, and never thought of setting down with Theodore and trying the thing out. Her flight, her inconsistencies in finding her rescuer, the supposed smuggler, as the head of her family, her guardian and protector, his disabbling influence over her mental faculties, their uninterrupted series of circumstances by field and flood, the looking of an

certainly—not in my apprehension—which their relations had begun to produce in her—all these made her glad of a day or so to herself. She wanted the current cut off so that she might become demagnetized.

Of course, she said, it was absurd of him to run away just after he had held her a little tighter than was necessary in picking her up—that was crude and made the situation worse. She wondered just what the relationship was, anyhow. Aunt Chloe said that Calhouns were Calhouns, and she never bothered about different kinds. He couldn't be a real uncle, Virginia felt sure of that. He might be a son of General Carson by a second wife. He was the head of the family, anyhow; she must be satisfied with that. If he would only quit looking happyish eyes and prancing about night! And if he would only come back!

Of his invention, save that it was in the mysterious shed, chosen because of its remoteness on an unobstructed beach, she really knew nothing. She began to wonder now whether he was a work/genius, or only the crude product of a country college, with nothing to command a second glance except his dainty sweetness, the pathetically peering in his eyes, and the wonderful softness of his voice. She was missing vaudiville skirts, too. Oh, the dramatic uplift was active, down at Carson's Landing!

The devil was there as usual, and helped the thing along. Virginia stood on a stool to reach the "Daily Dialogue," and Satanas guided her fingers to "Doctor Pascal," which he had bound to reach Mr. Hawken's delicious piece of foolery. Like Eve, she bit, and Mrs. Scott found her deep in the love of Clothilde and her uncle.

"A great story of a great passion," said Mrs. Scott.

"Is it?" asked Virginia the Uncaudal. "Zola is so uninteresting—I just picked it up, you know!"

"They were uncle and niece," said Mrs. Scott.

Virginia flicked the covers with her thumb, making a sound like a fly in a web. "Thocking!" said she. "I didn't think the law allowed such alliances."

"Love," said Mrs. Scott, "is sometimes very different from marriage."

"It's an unpleasant topic," said Virginia.

"Very!" answered Mrs. Scott. "It is growing warm, you are quite flushed."

"But what is the law?" asked Virginia.

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Mrs. Scott.

"Being a question," said Virginia, "that can never arise, the law wouldn't cover it."

"Zola," replied Mrs. Scott, "would not have used an impossible case. To be sure, he put Clothilde and Pascal into constant and intimate contact and——"

"Oh, it's quite unthinkable!" said Virginia. "Pascal was old and—she'd always known him as her uncle."

"Such circumstances," asserted Mrs. Scott, "make all the difference in the world."

When the absorbed Virginia saw the lapse of the remark she almost snapped at her companion. "Not at all!" said she. "Not the least difference in the world!" And she threw the book away, and went down to watch for boats—especially for a remarkably fast motor-launch, which had cleared from Wick's Bay up river recently with magnolia blossoms, youth, and palpitations of the heart. It was a long time coming. So Virginia took up Pencilope's occupation. She was a web of fancies every night and awaked it out the next morning.

One day her heart fluttered when Aunt Chloe announced a man to see her, for it must mean an emissary from the Shoguns or from Uncle Theodore. It was in fact Harrod, unchanged save that he wore boots.

"Mind' Theodor'," said he, "reckoned Ab'd bettah stop by an' ask how yo'-all is, an' tell yo'-all we-all ah to'able well, an' gittin' the machine right nigh ready to launch, ma'am."

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Scott. "Is that all?"

Captain Harrod bit himself in an equivocal position. It really was all his message, but it seemed too bald and Spartan now for neat courtesy. "He says," interpolated the ancient machine, "they's mighty little to see that, but we'd be right pleased, ma'am, if yo'-all could pass that a-way and stop by."

"We'd be in the way," said Virginia gratefully.

"Oh, no," the captain assured her; "not at all, but it might be inconvenient for yo', ma'am."

"I found," said she, "He quite giddy there!"

The captain did not allow himself the luxury of a smile. He consented to stay in launch, during which must be described the anecdote with an approximation to enthusiasm. "If she flies," said he, "an'

"Miss' Theodor' allows she sho' will, sho'll make the long-terns an' skunks think they's a new breed o' hawks here."

"Uncle Theodore," remarked Virginia, turning to Mrs. Stott after learning about long-terns and skunks, "has invited us to visit him. And, do you know, I think we'll go back with Captain Harrod, if you can overcome your aversion to the water."

"Will the lay be rough?" asked Mrs. Stott, as if confident that Captain Harrod served out the weather.

"Dead as'n, ma'am," said the captain; "flat as a flounder."

"And think," went on Virginia, "how interesting it will be to see the first great vessel launched! Please, please, let's go!"

"When do you start?" asked Mrs. Stott, wondering.

"Early this mornin'," replied the captain.

"We'll go," said Mrs. Stott.

The captain, considering all that part of the day between the midday meal and nightfall as "evening" and after dark as night, had to make the distinction clear to the ladies, who, when they understood it, heartily pardoned their damage and embarked. They were a gay party. Virginia was full of laughter, her color rose and her eyes dilated as they took the stream, early enough, to the captain's relief, to let them through the new canal from Strong's Bayou to the lagoon by daylight, for there were ghosts in this region by night.

"Do you see any signs of a storm?" asked Mrs. Stott, noting his upward glances.

"No, ma'am," he returned. "Ah was 'jut tyme' to make out if Ah'd ev' seen that craft befo' she'd thak."

The craft alluded to was a great steam Corder, gleaming in the sun, her rider a dark line across her bow, and along her side the stripe of a narrow aeroplane.

Virginia studied the ship absorbedly with field-glasses. She was standing over from Mable's, and was now above Montrose, sailing low as if for a short reprieve.

"I think," said Virginia, "that she's the *Roc*. I've seen of it."

"Yes, ma'am," replied Harrod; and not another word was said until the captain saw the ship looming, sliding, balancing like a hawk far to the seaward.

"She's lyin' so," said the captain. "Thak goes hah' hah' down."

"Why," said Virginia wonderingly, "what can she want over there in the woods?"

"She's 'jut about over' yo' home, ma'am," said Harrod.

Virginia grew pale, and scanned the great vessel, with she lowered lit like a vulture to the ground. "Can't you go a little faster?" said she, leaping down the bleachers.

"Aftah we clear Week's Bay," said the captain, "we'll go right hahk, mhm. But we can't go much faster 'lyah, Ah'm afraid."

Once clear of the channel, they stood for the south shore, the engine firing in continuous explosions as the captain threw on the last speed. The lay was a great mirror, and suddenly, with a little scream, Virginia leaped out to look upward past the evening. In the water she had seen, coming up from the depths under their rail, the *Roc*, under full speed, her screws shimmering, her giant hull a resplendent bubble of steel. Looming up, Virginia saw her overhead, and covered back into the boat; for peering over the rail and calling her an evil bird was Silberberg.

"Shall Ah answer the hail, mhm?" asked the captain.

"No!" whispered Virginia. "Take no notice, I beg of you, Captain!"

The *Roc* swept on like a meteor, leaving the launch behind. Virginia asked the captain if he supposed she had been recognized.

"Ah reckon not, miss," said he. "Jus a chance mornin', Ah reckon."

The *Roc* was miles ahead now, and Virginia breathed freely. She was not frightened, she told herself, but she didn't care to meet the Shaynes or Silberberg.

"She's come to, right over' the inn," said the captain. "We're over'haulin' her."

"Is there no way of getting to Theodore," asked Virginia, "except by passing them?"

"No, miss," said the captain. "It's that a-way o' now."

Virginia sat under the middle of the awning, quite on a needle. The boat slowly threaded the shell's entrance to the lagoon, and passed the wheel of the inn. The people on the quay were crossing their arms at the descent of the passengers from the *Roc*.

"Hurry, Captain, hurry!" said Virginia.

"Ah cahn't, ma'am," said he. "Ah'll hav to be to a minute job that boat. Now! fear, miss, yo' all right with me."

"Here you see," said a voice from the wheel, "two soon-to-be-discarded modes of navigation, the boat displacing water and the aerosol floating in the air upheld by gas. The hydroplane must replace the boat, the aerosol, the aircraft. I have made a special

ty of this. I know. The value of that cigarette-smoked suit up there at junk, deducted from her present value, is the measure of Mr. Finley Shapoe's loss when our big show opens its ticket-wagon. Don't you?"

Virginia looked attentively at the speaker, started to hear Shapoe's name mentioned almost in his presence. She saw a youngish man of more than medium height, thin habit of body, and long thick hair, who was gazing with every appearance of interest, not at the ship, but at a lady of perhaps twenty-seven years, short, plump, admirably groomed in a sort of reduced half-mourning, with her jolly little face, her brown hair touched about it, turned toward the *Rex*, her prominent little chin carrying the facial angle forward and downward.

"That talk will do with me," said she, "but you've got to show papa something besides ordinary pretty men, or there'll be trouble."

"Never mind, honey."

"Now that will do," said she.

"Well, I'll think it," said he. "The body may be in custody, but the spirit is free, hey?" And my youthful Edison can't shake us much longer. Your respected dad, dear—I mean, of course—why, here he is now!"

Mr. Waddy carried a daisy, which he handed to the lady, who began picking off its petals, turning toward the younger man an amused back up and down which was a new of buttons.

"I don't think I'll give you another petal, Caroline," said the old man. "Pickin' it to bits like that."

"I'm trying my fortune," said she.

"Haump," said her father.

The younger man, recovered from his perplexity, was watching the new of buttons come by once; and as the launch gathered way Virginia bowed him away, to hail on after hail: "She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me. Haump!"

The shout greeted the favorable answer of the attack. The lady, as if feeling the finger in her curls, turned and greatly slipped the gentleman's ears. The launch shot into the canal, and out of sight.

"Haump!" shouted Virginia.

"Why," said Mrs. Scott, "you are quite excited, Miss Susan."

"It was the fortune-telling," said Virginia.

"I wanted it to come out that way. And I said 'Haump!' to him."

Captain Harrod did not shout. He was

grave. He wondered what Mr. Theodore would say when the launch discharged the cargo resulting from his extraordinary embassy.

STABLE AND UNSTABLE EQUILIBRIUM

WHEATONER says Mr. Carson may have left toward Captain Harrod for bringing Virginia Swann and Miss Scott into camp was sternly reprimanded. The ladies were made sole owners of the cabin, and the men slept with the animals by night, while by day Captain Harrod stood by to aid Theodore, slipping away to the top of the dunes at times to scan the offing for the ship-shaped Snodgrass, implicitly reappearing now and then with her oval deck just awash, her then, semi-invisible periscope in air. Having arranged with Reagan for a cessation of the continued headiness until the second was off the stocks, the captain was worried. He wanted the Chautauque salute one day, whereupon the submarine sounded like a scored compass. The captain's ingenuity was not equal to the task of developing a theory to account for her presence, or her alarm. Perhaps she was not the Snodgrass; but if not, why was she peering about? And why was she frightened at the old signal?

So the talking of aerostatics to Theodore, and inspiring him to greater application, fell to Virginia, for Miss Scott was studying shells, and became possessed of an interesting energy that commanded Virginia's admiration; but if Virginia wandered away for a little while the sound of Carson's tools ceased, and he came looking for her. As he told her of his struggles, his experiments, his falling into Doctor Witherspoon's garden, his meeting with Crughead, the financial embarrassment of Mr. Waddy, and the puzzling messages he had received, she became an audience, too.

"I'd like to meet Mr. Crughead," said she. "I'd like to feel more of him. How can he secure a monopoly of the navigation of the air?"

"I have no idea," replied Theodore, "but he says he has."

"Now, what," she queried, "could ever prevent the *Rex* from freely sweeping down and taking me away?"

"I could," said Theodore firmly.

"Maybe," said Virginia, "if you wouldn't be glad to have them—"

"Virginia," he began, adopting the familiar address.

"But," she went on, "from sweeping you

know? Your Mr. Craighead couldn't prevent them from either swooping or swooping, it seems to me."

This statement was worthy of consideration, so he sat down beside her to ponder.

"No," said she, "you mustn't quit work. We must do our part, whatever Mr. Craighead does."

Theodore was really tired, but he rose and returned to work. A third person helps himself to rise by putting his hand on something. Theodore placed his on the bench, and if Virginia's hand happened to be just there was it his fault? He fell to work furiously. When he looked again, she was tapping the hand to her bosom as if it had been a doll and she a little girl.

He opened the gyroscope globe now, and set the heavy little wheels spinning, rocking the screen from side to side to note the operation of the balancing-devices. Preserving their perpendicularity as if of intelligent purpose, the gyroscopes moved the levers of the wing-differential which would coordinate the propeller-wheels of the lower wing and correspondingly retard the upper. Right or left, stern or bow, the depressed area would work harder, the raised part slower, while powerful rudders would cooperate, moving like a fish's fins.

"See how it works, Virginia!" he exclaimed. "It knows the levers to be moved. Why, if a puff starts to overturn her, she'll strike with the lowered wings alone. Like a bird. And see the intelligence of those rudders! And that fellow said she'd turn turtle!"

Virginia gazed in admiration. The clutch had been off ten minutes, and still the gyroscopes spun, so silent, so immovable, that one might have laid hold of them, thinking them stationary.

"How long they run!" she cried.

"Long!" said he sensuously. "Why, with the globe on and the air out of it, they'll run a whole day after the engines are stopped. They're the heart and brain of my invention, Virginia. I'm proud of it."

"And Mr. Craighead doesn't get any report? What must he think?"

"I told him about it," said Theodore proudly. "And it was no time to telegraph apologies. It was a time to work."

"I won't bother you any more," said she, stepping from the air. "I give you my word."

He rose to follow, his foot on the gyroscope,

his eyes demanding explanation. "If you go," said he, "I shall cease work at once. You help me."

"Then go back to work, unless," she pleaded. "Please. And I'll read some of poor Mr. Craighead's telegrams."

She saw where he could see her by turning his head—quite the thing, as between an affectionate uncle and a charming young niece. Blood is thicker than water, thought she—oh, surely thicker!

The first message was addressed to "General Theodore Calson, M. A.," and ran: "A! God's name, sweet knight, discover. Art asset of liability? Answer ye or no." This came one addressed to "Palmetto Branch, or somewhere, it is hoped," and seemed to be regarded by Craighead as very important: "My lack hath turned! It is Craighead Felix now," it read. "I could fall in a well and come up bearing the jewel of the tawdry toast in my ear. Have found a gang of gamblers organized to get at grants in no time, to reach New York by Friday, Chicago already hoaxed in. But is there any reward? Answer, for the sake of divine pity, just one levelin' my people. Napoleon Craighead."

"What does it mean," asked Virginia, "all this about grants and chasing New York and hounding in Chicago? It's awfully queer."

"I don't know," replied Theodore. "Some visionary thing. Now listen, Virginia, and watch. She's ready to try."

The Skiffboard, outside, if her inexplicable proofing had to do with anyone's desire to see what the airship would do, was not to have long to wait. While Virginia was reading the telegrams Theodore, whose grins and strength were fast winning her rather doubtful respect, replaced the vacuum globe over the gyroscopes. Now he threw in the clutch, and the wings began whirling like great buxom, blowing the sand on the floor into the furthest corners, and setting light things flying in the tremendous currents of air. Faster and faster the wing-sections whirled until the screen strained upward on her hinges like a nestle home. Theodore tipped a lever, and she leaped forward, snatching the ropes at an angle of forty-five degrees, he reversed it, and she slacked backward, as might an eagle repelled by a tree.

"Pull the bar on the end of that wing," said Theodore, "and see if you can tip her. Pull!"

Virginia walked gingerly forward, her dress

flying, one had whisked to the top of the room. Grasping the flying rope-end, she pulled downward, the wing settled slightly, and then, as the gyroscope-brass felt the depression, the levered wing lifted as if consciously rising to a load. It was marvelous.

"Can't you pull harder?" cried Theodore, bareheaded, his hair flying. "Try!"

"Aye, aye, did!" cried Virginia cheerily. "Try it in!" Reaching up, she pulled herself clear of the floor, her strong little form swinging like a most charming pendulum. The enormous dragon-fly, throwing its power into the depressed wing, rode level with nine stone weights of solid American girl dangling from the tip of one wing, a mechanical paradox! Back and forth she swung until, with muscles weakened, she dropped to the floor. Instantly the released side rose a thought too high, and the other took the power; there was a momentary vibration as the momentum of the swing was taken out by the differentials, and the boat stood in air, as level as a ship in a calm.

"Harrak!" shouted Theodore, swinging his arms. "Never anything like it in the world! Carried you on one wing, and kept level! Harrak for the Virginia!"

He eased her down, and stopped to where Virginia waited, hands outstretched, hair blown abroad, palms red from the rough rope.

"Are you going to name her that?" she cried. "Oh, how perfectly dear of you!"

Theodore held the chafed hands, triumph in his face, happy as only he can be who tastes the fruit of achievement. "She carried you on one wing," he cried. "She did, didn't she?"

"She did," replied Virginia, "and it made my hands too sore for squeezing purposes, didn't? But she did."

Theodore opened the little hands and kissed the red palms over and over again. Mrs. Stott came in and saw him doing it.

"I hurt my hands," said Virginia showing them, "and under a kissing them well."

"Very kind and self-sacrificing, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Stott.

"I'm going with you now," said Virginia, taking Mrs. Stott's arm.

"It may be as well," said Mrs. Stott.

Virginia looked back, nay, smiling, a little reckless. Theodore went for Harrod to help with the launching. They were all excitement, for by noon of the next day they would have her in the air. Mr. Wanner, outside in the *Shuttlecock*, thought it quite free

MR. CRAIGHHEAD IN CONTOUR

Mr. Wanner, having submitted to his local lawyer Craighhead's scheme for monopolizing the air, hesitated, and was lost. "I'll go into it," said he. "We'll make everybody come and settle that wants a top by air-shops. Hay?"

"Exactly," replied Craighhead.

"Just as if the whole country was our farm," cried Mr. Waddy.

"It will be for circumstantial purposes," replied Craighhead. "And as you so well said, a farm's a dash. And remember, Mr. Waddy, in putting Skyles and his planes down and out we and our partners are making way for the machineless, unimpeachable, double-acting, universal-speed, direct-drive, non-balancing, orthochromatic Cannon aérostat."

"Huh!" speculated Mr. Waddy.

"Oh, say not so, Mr. Waddy, say not so!" urged Craighhead protestingly. "Our aérostat has everything—the in-shoot, the drop, the float, the out—everything! Tested under all conditions, margin-of-safety factor so completely looked after, basic principle is so demonstrably correct, gyroscopic vibration-devices for automatic power-distribution to correct perturbations of all sorts, perpendicular, horizontal, and oblique—why doubt these and doubt the advance of science?"

"Well, you'd better have your partner on hand," said Mr. Waddy, "as he promised, or I'll know why he took my good hard money."

It was on occasions of this sort that Craighhead had awaited telegrams begging to know if Theodore really had an air-shop, and asking Cannon's status as asset or liability. For Mr. Waddy had accompanied Craighhead East, and these telegraphic moments of a spirit agonized by doubt had been evoked by his vacillating attitude toward the possible failure of Cannon to come north, claiming the air in the invention which was to change the world.

"But think, my dear sir," protested Craighhead, "of the untold millions in the Brown idea—airial monopoly! Even if Theodore should be only four shafts and a spindle, we still hold the ace, my dear Mr. Waddy. Do not grind your teeth thus, so long as the American Stratus and Air-Products Company swarms as the Archimedean lever with which to pry up and dump the world. We are ahead, whatever happens to the aérostat and of the deal."

"Well," said Mr. Waddy, "the aérostat end had better come to the coast, or I'll see

what law there is for getting money by false pretenses."

And Craighend sent another learned query as to whether the tardy Theodore really had an answer, Carson meanwhile being oblivious of it all in his effort to be a well-behaved uncle in Virginia down among the pines.

The two men were the best of traveling companions. Mr. Waddy insisted on going in the smoker, Craighend took a stateroom while his money lasted, and then borrowed of Mr. Waddy. In New York Mr. Waddy stayed at the Mills, and would not let Craighend go to the Yatchek because they ought to be where they could consult. This accreted Craighend's working to the nearest subway station every morning and going up-town to make the start for the day. Here he would enter the Yatchek's lobby, solemnly fee a boy, buy a cigar, and regale Mr. Waddy in the street. Then, he explained, was to get the proper psychological tone for financial operations, to complete which he took an electric tannum to Wall Street, and waited in the anteroom of a friend's office the appearance of Mr. Waddy, who came by car, scrutinizing the buildings like a prospective buyer. Yet they got along swimmingly.

Craighend advertised for people able to organize a rapid business campaign covering the civilized world to meet him in West Third Street at the studio of an acquaintance, to whom he requested to impart any knowledge of the town with the specialists. Mr. Waddy and Craighend arrived, somewhat late, on account of the time consumed in adjusting Craighend's suit, and found a crush of people entirely alien to the fine arts filling the studio and the hall outside. The sculptor was disputing strenuously with a Haman-nosed captain of industry as to whether the sculptor would or would not contribute a nickel with which to fix the telephone for the purpose of calling the police that the sculptor might be "plucked" for putting in "there ad."

Craighend broke through by impersonating an officer, shouting, "Make way for the police!" and upper-cutting the crowd with his elbows. "Hello, De Land!" said he, nodding to the sculptor.

"That you, Craig?" called the sculptor. "What! Not sober? Go after the police. Turn those people out! Please, Craig!"

"Friends of mine," said Craighend. "I advertised for 'em. Hope you haven't been inconvenienced, old man!"

"Not at all!" replied the sculptor sarcastically, "but get them out, please."

Craighend's manner of disposing of the crowd commanded Mr. Waddy's sincere respect. He went about with marvelous rapidity, sending away those whose comeliness was unquestionable, and making engagements with others at "our Wall Street office," the name of which made everybody more respectful.

The dinner to which Craighend took Mr. De Land and Mr. Waddy was the first of a series which reduced Mr. Waddy to torpor. The old gentleman in his long frock coat which buttoned to a point, his troway face, and his evident attachment to Craighend was remembered in certain ultra-bourgeois circles for his surreptitious sliding into the darkest corners of cafes and roof-gardens. He felt obliged to keep with Craighend, because of a suspicion that the anecdote was a figment of two History Institute imaginations, and he did not propose to let any guilty man escape. So he providently engaged a detective to shadow both himself and Craighend, the unremitting presence of whom in very plain clothes made Mr. Waddy feel and look guilty and furtive. His second reason for becoming Craighend's double was his sense of the duty of preventing that pupil of Doctor Witherspoon from breaking the vow of abstinence. So he drank most of the ingredients served to Craighend, somewhat to the injury of his health, but much to the betterment of his reputation as a connoisseur.

Altogether, it was a relief to get Craighend home, where he installed him as a lodger and a boarder, changing him well for his accommodation, and finding him the money as his note to pay for it. On arrival he went to bed and turned Craighend over to Mrs. Graybill, with strict injunctions to telephone the sheriff's office if he was unaccounted for for more than an hour. He told his daughter that no tongue could describe what he had been through, and he was not to be disturbed except for something important.

"If Mr. Carson comes," said Mrs. Graybill, "I'll call you."

"And if Craighend elopes?"

"While in my charge," said Mrs. Graybill, "Mr. Craighend will not depart."

It was a situation with some unique aspects. Craighend began whiffing away time with a work on the morphology of the crawfish, and dipped into De Quincey's "Spanish Nun." Looking from the library window, he saw

Mrs. Grayhill enter a summer house, leaving a red hat on the railing outside. The "morphology" grew uninteresting. He shut his eyes, but the red hat blazed on inside his eyelids, red, yellow, green, and finally purple. He stepped through the window, scanned the door for the second, saw nothing anatomical save the usual sight of anatomy, went into the summer house, and started at finding Mrs. Grayhill there, her hair needed about her head, her little nose elevated in that comical resemblance to her father's, her chin aggressively carried forward, her dress fitting as marvelously as ever.

"Don't look on my going!" he begged.

"I had no such intention," she replied.

"You may smoke, if you wish."

"Thanks," and he lighted a pipe. "Mr. Waddy informs me that the late Mr. Grayhill was a minister of the gospel," he ventured.

"Yes," she replied. "He was."

"And that he has been called," Craighead went on, "to a better life some year or more."

"Fifteen months," answered Mrs. Grayhill.

"I have been reading," said Craighead, "a work on the morphology of the crossfish. It holds me enthralled."

"So I see," she replied.

Craighead looked up suspiciously, but she looked innocent. "The crossfish," he resumed, "is admirably adapted to a very lonely station. But how wonderfully his morphology illustrates the overruling design in nature. The person who fails to glean wisdom from the crossfish has never tested his intelligence with a bare toe, nor studied his morphology. Pardon me!"

"Mr. Craighead!" Mrs. Grayhill had dropped her work and was looking at Craighead moodily. "Don't pose," said she. "Don't think that I want a beautiful lesson on everything, if I have been a minister's wife. Tell me of Mr. De Land, and—and that life. Tell me, Mr. Craighead!"

It was a very, very matter of fact of which Mrs. Grayhill heard. Whether Craighead's statues were the equal of Mr. De Land's when the former took up chemistry may be doubted, but Mrs. Grayhill got the impression that they were. The point here is that there was no danger of Craighead's running off while she listened with such breathless interest to his adventures. He explained that he studied anatomy was from the study of antique anatomy to surgery and from medical jurisprudence to law,

and over all gloomed the shadow of his wonderful, his poetic, his epic dissipation. Mrs. Grayhill was shocked, but she asked for all the horrible tale, that he might survive it that nothing would ever, ever induce him to drink again.

"Only one thing would ever do that," said he, "or maybe two. The pangs of despised love——"

"Which you have never experienced?" she asked.

"Never," said he, "as I am now likely to."

"And the other shock that might overturn your self-control?"

"The failure of Canon," replied Craighead. "That would put me down and out—down and out."

The judge and the judge walked together, talked, and played tennis, in growing intimacy and friendship. The judge approached the edge of love-making, looked hungry and pensive, searched gloves and handkerchiefs, and intimated seriously with Caroline's household duties, all of which was borne by her with an equanimity that spoke volumes for her loyalty to the command under which she had taken this strange gentleman into custody. She was a very dutiful daughter.

But the relations of Craighead to Mr. Waddy became more and more strained. Canon, long overdue, had not appeared, no great bird came into view by day, no mechanical dragon-fly settled in the yard by night. Mr. Waddy was morose. The National Company had already spent its nets over many states, through the confidential relations of its agents with the National Federation of Farmers, spinning aerial monopoly as a spider spins its web. But the more promising this grew the more galled and embittered grew Mr. Waddy at Theodore's delinquency; for the second, after all, was the thing which had appealed to his imagination and related his desires.

"Oh, never fear," Craighead promised. "It'll be here in time. Delays, delays, Mr. Waddy. Think of the spark-plugs and differential and mufflers and things. Why, just imagine——"

"Hah!" sneered Mr. Waddy. "I don't believe you know a thing about it!"

"Sir," said Craighead, "this amounts to an imputation upon my pledge that the second is a perfected and certain success, an imputation unworthy of you, sir, until I have had a chance to put the thing in proof on you

have shown its immortality. This is upset, is it?"

"All right," said the old gentleman. "We'll go on' find the dumbest thing. Start to-morrow morning."

"Certainly," said Craghead, in an apparent embarrassment. "With all the world, if you like."

"Very well," said Mrs. Graybill; "that includes me."

"Ah, no," rejoined Craghead; "you include it."

Thus it was that the three were at Palmetto Beach when Captain Harrod passed through Strong's Bayou with Virginia and Mrs. Starr, on his way to the cabin where the first Carson account was preparing for its delayed flight north. One may draw one's own conclusions as to the significance of Craghead's questioning of the circles, dirty-petal-fishermen, by the buttons on Mrs. Graybill's incensed back, and of his punishment by that slight box on the ear, but however he stood with Mrs. Graybill, his relations with Mr. Waddy had become more strained. Ticksen had been brought to Palmetto Beach on Craghead's statement that Carson was there, and they had disembarked in glum silence on Mr. Waddy's part, nervous frequency on Craghead's, and anxious endeavor on Mrs. Graybill's to smooth things over.

"Ah!" said Craghead. "How natural it all looks! I seem never to have left them before, I remember fairly, shapes. Dear old Yupiter Hedge Inn."

They were halted by a liveried attendant. "Beg pardon, sir," said he. "This is a private club house. The ain't over there."

"Oh, certainly!" replied Craghead. "All current waders look alike to me."

"The one over at the sea looks like back," said Mr. Waddy grimly.

"Oh, see the magnolia bloom!" cried Mrs. Graybill. "I wonder if we can get any."

"Right after dinner," replied Craghead. "I'll go back into the wood——"

"I guess not," said Mr. Waddy, still more grimly. "Find Carson first!"

"That, my dear sir," answered Craghead jauntily. "can wait the morning. Mrs. Graybill's desire to see the poems of Lancelotti, and——"

"No, papa," said Mrs. Graybill, with a nervous little laugh. "I shall not stir till I've seen everything."

"Angel!" whispered Craghead, pressing

her arm, as he helped her up the steps. "Keep him busy while I take a hike around."

Carson's guests were interested a little later in observing the slender man with the voluminous hair sliding along shore casually questioning every water-side character he met and listening tips at parting. They were mystified when the short-old professor with the wild and turbulent beard sat out on a firmest bare-and-boneds chair after him. The mystery and interest grew intense when the cheerless-looking widow, who was clearly the old man's daughter, emerged in unimpeachable walking costume, overtook the young man by a short cut, and was strolling along discussing hermit-crabs with him when the old gentleman gave in sight, slackened his speed, and overtook them at a leisurely pace out of keeping with his bent, perspiration, and shortness of breath. The theory was suggested that the young man was off his head, and trying the sea-air, while his keepers saw to it that he did not cut his throat with an oyster-shell.

"I discover," said Craghead, as they walked back to the hotel, "that our young conqueror of the upper seas is not here. Commandingly odd of him to remove to his plantation now. Mysterious reasons, eh, Mr. Waddy?"

"I guess so," said Mr. Waddy, "an' o' course you don't know where the plantation is, an' we'll have to wait some more. Hey?"

"Don't know," replied Craghead. "Don't know. Well, wait till morning. Steamer up Fish River at nine, plantation at noon, long chase over. I fear one thing only, that he has completed the ascent and thence to keep his trout on the front lawn. That would amount to something like a complete joke, wouldn't it?"

"Huh!" grunted Mr. Waddy. "Don't worry. You bet he ain't few more."

If Craghead's easy flow of speech was somewhat impeded by his sense of the uncertainties, not to say dangers, of his position, it was none when they returned from the plantation, having elicited from the reluctant Chiles the information that Mr. Theodore, his machine, his niece, and his niece's companion, were at Harrod's camp on the beach, which was "off thaseway." They just went down the river. It was through a canal, across some land, and then they were clear. She didn't know about no second, but Mr. Theodore was a propitious' man' with some flyin'-machines. She reckoned the

canal at Palmetto Beach was the one, but she didn't know. This information, Craighead declared, made everything clear, but on returning to the inn Mr. Waddy hired a local officer to guard Craighead's room, and began talking thoughts of having a warrant issued against him for something. Mr. Waddy was not quite clear for what.

Craighead was trapped, lost, betrayed. He sat in his room choosing a cigar and calculating the distance to the ground. It looked feasible to get down a pillar of the veranda into the woods. Canees was an impostor, they were guilty of fraud, there was no reason, and the Air-Products Company would collapse at Mr. Waddy's detection. Life might be sustained on shell fish along shore, though the hermit-crabs were not tempting. Lifting the cash softly, he started out through the window, determined to run for it. His bluff had been called, and he had no cards. He had put too much reason into his description of things down here. Nothing was to be gained by awaiting arrest. The world was wide. The weather was warm. His foot touched the roof, when—

"Ting-a-ting-a-ting-a-ting-a-ting-a-ting!"

His telephone rang. Was his good angel on the wire? She was.

"Is this you, Mr. Craighead? You know who this is?"

"Know these tones?" he gasped. "Why, were I in deepest hush, through geological depths of burning marl and lignite and other carbonaceous deposits, I'd know it! What is it, dear one?"

"Oh, nothing! Only I have just learned at the post-office that Mr. Carson is back here a few miles, and the man will get us a guide in the morning. Is that all right, or have I made a mess of it as a woman always does?"

"You are— My God, Caroline, you have saved me from you know not what! I shall love you, love you, love you——"

And the receiver was hung up.

Morning saw Craighead himself again. He lectured Mr. Waddy on the old kitchen-midden shell banks. "These piles of shells," said he, "are neither Indian remains, as the ordinary significance of the term *Indian*, nor Aztec, in the proper sense that I have made a specialty of these things. They are——"

"Beast widths", sah," said the man with the launch.

They went through the canal and the narrow, shimmered the black waters of the freshwater lake, and landed at the shelly

hammock. While the boatman searched for a path to the Gulf beach, they sat on the shell-mound, fascinated by the strange landscape. The black pools and muddy marshes between them and the line of surf, which they could hear roaring beyond the dunes, were dotted with clumps of tall pines and splashed with scrub-oak thickets.

"These pines," said Mrs. Graybill, "are like palms on coral islands, so tall, so slender, and—— Why, what's that?"

Well might she speak thus, for, rising from beyond the dunes as if from the sea, there soared a great something which moved like a bird. With enormous wings steadily outstretched it made island, like a foraging hawk. It swayed like a magic ship as it neared them, sailing low, and dominating the sky like a cloud. It came with the most amazing speed, like an eagle in mid-swoop, so swift, so light, so lucid that all impression of weight was abolished, and the huge thing filled the mind with the notion of levity—like a humming-bird. It swerved, as it neared the lake, and shivered round as nimbly a gull to pick up food. The whirr of machinery came down to them like the rush of a shower and quail hunting from covert, as, with a wide graceful curve, it departed as suddenly as it had come, leaving them gazing after it, spellbound, almost struck dumb.

"Oh, of course," said Craighead, his hands trembling, his face white, "this man Carson is a fraud! Oh, yes, we know it all the time! But you see that his scheme has gone through the empty form of evensong all the same. Flying like a frigate-bird. *Shayne, charge! Roll over, Silberberg!* And don't dare move till I say so. Oh, this is rotten, rotten! I've got to lose some coat! Honey?"

Mrs. Graybill was running along the path after the guide, who was waiting every nerve to attain the beach where the view would be unimpeded. Craighead ran after her. Mr. Waddy pulled along behind, hopelessly unplaced.

"Did you see Carson?" said he. "And there was a girl with him. Some confidence to make a lady on board, not?"

"Oh, let us hurry," said she. "It's the most marvellous thing in the world."

Emerging from the dunes, they saw the air-ship skimming the line of beach foam, growing smaller with a rapidity that spoke eloquently of her speed. Down the beach stood Mrs. Stott and Captain Harrod, looking

after the air-ship is unarmament and delight. It was the day of the first trial. The prophecy of the night before was fulfilled. They had her in the air.

Perhaps two miles apart from them, then turned like a frightened horse, swept seaward about to the line of the outer bar, and came back down the wind like an arrow, Virginia waving an American flag over the rail, and Theodore swinging his hat. In all these groups was joy. The wonderful creation of Carson's genius was strong, as he had promised, her every movement under perfect control.

Suddenly, as she passed them with a maneuver so astounding for an aerial craft that they could scarcely believe their eyes, she stopped. The sharp whirr of the beating wing-section told of the sudden reversal of their stroke and the unprecedented phenomenon of the almost instant arrest of such a machine in mid-air. It was an unnecessary stroke, thought the captain—Theodore ought not to have done it. He saw the reason, however, a moment later: A black slimy nose—the nose of the *Shirlolack*—had poked itself above water right ahead of the Virginia. A boat that looked more and sinking had drawn away from her, with a struggling, gasping figure on it waving a signal of distress. The slimy nose had then sunk, leaving the apparent *casualty* to perish, unless rescued by the Virginia.

Accepting the business task, she had reversed with that bolting whirr that had reached the ears of those on land. Lower, lower, lower sank the aerial, until its car seemed almost to touch the waves. The man in distress seemed to throw something like a lance over the nacelle of the air-ship, and the great bird rose slightly, as if to be safe from the billows. The *Shirlolack* again peeped above the waves, her manhole opened, and the casemate of the stove boat went down into the submarine.

It was absolutely beyond the power of anyone looking on to guess what was taking place. Why had the man made the signal for help, if the submarine was standing by? If the coming of the submarine to his rescue was unexpected, why had he not cut off the line from the aerial? Why—and suddenly they all felt that something sinister, something devilish, was taking place. They heard a shout from Theodore, a scream from Virginia. The submarine had come awash again, and from her open manhole came the

crack of a pistol, a pistol aimed at the air-ship. Then she sank again. The air-ship was driven downward by the blow, struggling toward the land, hanging by the fatal thread like a trapped bird, she seemed at her wits' end, while the grim submarine, like a devil-fish which had been empowered to get a taste about a waterfowl, made seaward, out into the gulf, out into deep water, with a purpose as manifest as it was deadly.

DEVIL-CHIEF VS. HERO

When the aerial was run out on her ways by the long shed in which she had been built there was a flutter of expectancy among those so deeply concerned in her flight. Captain Harrod forgot his periodical visits to the hillcock to scan the offing for the arctic periscope or the fiddling back of the mysterious lurking submarine, which, like a shark awaiting the dropping overboard of a man or other morsel, had haunted these waters since the day Warner had been driven from the camp as a spy. The captain was a moving kit of oil-cans, wrenches, spanners, extra parts, odd coils of battery, plugs, screws, and the like, which in his excitement he kept carrying about long after the machine was ready for her flight. Virginia was a close second to the captain in the matter of mending the invention. She moved levers, tried sparks, and made herself useful about the machine in so many ways that Theodore promoted her to the position of first mate on the spot.

"The first mate always sails with the ship, ain't it?" she suggested.

"I thought you had enough of air-ships," said Theodore, "in the wreck of Warner's helicopter."

"But that was only what Captain Harrod calls 'a chickeny thing.' This is as stable as the *Box* herself."

"Would you really go on the trial trip?" he asked.

"Try me?" said she. "I want to."

"You'd be worth a dozen of the captain," replied Carson. "He hasn't the faintest idea of the principles of the Virginia, while you could fly her as a hawk."

"I could now," asserted Virginia. "She is a simple, manageable little thing like her namesake."

"If she shows all her namesake's even traits——" began Theodore.

"Then I'm so go!" she pleaded.

"Captain," said Theodore, "here's a girl who wants to stay as first mate."

"Yes, sah?"

"Well," went on Theodore, "she will not be allowed to displace you. Get ready, Captain, we're going."

"Did—did—did ya' allow to' me—do' me to go?" asked the captain.

"Why, certainly," implied Carson. "Didn't you expect to go?"

"No, sah," replied the captain. "Ah never' allowed to go on any of these dash boats. Oh no'm, if ya'-all insist, Ah'll go along 'till I fall out, which'll be about do' fathom high. Ah go dizzy like, an' can't help it. How-ever' high goes."

"Now you must let me go!" she pleaded, with her hand on his arm. "If the captain gets dizzy—"

"Ho'r, staggerin', drink dizzy. Ah do," intoned Captain Hamed.

"It would be dangerous and foolish to take him, wouldn't it, wouldn't?"

Theodore hesitated. The weakness of height-sickness, and the hostile wrings of those subject to it, seemed to prove the captain's disability, and yet— "It would be foolhardy," said he. "Well, I can do it alone, if everything goes well. A little help might be important, but I—"

"I'm going, sakes," said Virginia. "There's no danger. I like it. Think of my thousands of miles in the Air."

"I can't consent to it," said Theodore, entering the air. "There's a grave theoretical danger. I should be blamed—"

But Virginia was seated beside him, a close-fitting hide cap on her head, wearing a dress of soft white wool and carrying a jacket over her arm. Evidently she had come out with the full intention of doing this. "My danger is theoretical," said she. "You're in going alone is quite real. Now, shall I keep the manometer readings? Oh, you haven't any! Well, then, the altimeter anemometer?"

"It's self-engineering," said Theodore. "Really, there's nothing to do, except to overcompensate, and—"

"And there'll be no overcompensate," she cried. "There's the clutch, Admiral of the Circumambient Inners. You do the work, and I'll play lady. We're off."

"Are you willing," said he, turning to her, "to forgive me for this, and everything I may ever have done, whatever happens?"

"Whatever happens, or doesn't happen, I forgive you," she cried. "There's the

clutch before the gyroscopes stop and the Virginia gets brain lag. Or shall I?"

"Just for luck," said Theodore, "you throw a go."

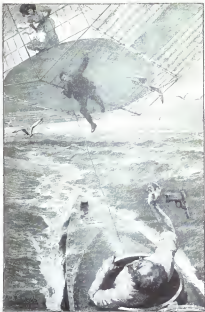
She threw over the lever, rather too far, and the wing-sections started with a deafening bang. A storm of wind roared back from under the wings, piling itself. Mrs. Stan's dress, and forcing her to turn her back to the wingmen. The deafening bang, as of many winds, issued as the big bird rose perpendicularly from the wings, and beat the ground no more. Theodore turned on a little more speed, put the rudder again in being her head to the light seaward wind, and as she mounted higher and higher he told her control. He pushed over the lever that disengaged the throat of the drawing blades, and she shot in over the chaos like a wild thing until he headed her back for the gull. Well made the hat, so that an overturn might not mean a drowsing, he craned about on a wide curve, which he gradually narrowed by a more extreme use of the helm, until she was spinning round and roared to an orbit, on which the tips of the inner wings were almost stationary.

"That turns out the balancing-device," shouted Theodore. "How's that?"

"Aye, aye, sir!" said Virginia. "That do sure test out the balancing-device. But if you let her chase her tail like this much longer I'm going to be red-faced. Please whirl her the other way a while, sakes!"

All her, all nervousness even, had gone from Theodore's mind. He felt the subjection of the machine as a horseman feels the obedience of his steed. He had much to learn of her navigating qualities; but the thing which all aeronauts had acquired, the mastery of balancing, he had not to learn. The gyroscope heads in the glass globe did show. To every perturbation the machine presented the resistance and correction of the automatic differentials of the wings. The powerful engines paired with an almost perfect freedom from vibration, one in each wing, each at the same normal speed, but to meet the least lowering of any part, the little gyroscopes spun in constant readiness to give to the depressed arm the advantage in speed which the operator could not impart if he chose, and to shift the rider's slant as a fish on a line.

"Walk about the deck," commanded Theodore. "See how the machine palms, like a butterfly's wings, as you go back and forth! See it, see it! It looks alive!"



WIDDER HAD JUST LIFTED HIS ARM IN FINE MANN, BUT IT FELL BALL
AS HE STRUCK DOWN BY A GENTLE SLOW

Virginia walked up to her commander and took his hand. "From the bottom of my heart," said she, "I congratulate you. You are a great man, Theodore Carson."

"Thank you, my dearest," said Theodore, lifting her hand to his lips. "It is all yours, you know, yours!"

Virginia withdrew her hand and walked forward. They were flying higher now, and she could see the pine woods far inland, with their square patches of plowed fields, their white houses behind the great green globes of the cypress-trees. The freshwater lakes lay almost under their feet, one beyond the other, like a string of beads; to the west lay the blue water of the lagoons, its farther beach lost in amethystine haze. Over the land beyond glimmered the waters of Mobile Bay. The mooring-balloons at Fort Morgan were almost lost in the white haze of spray from the swamy miles of breaking surf, and the Sand Island light split the far western horizon like a spike driven up through foam below to hold the gulf in place. The sun blazed overhead, but the breeze was cool, and the Virginia cut through it so readily that, except in the protected lee of the wedge-shaped wind-shields, she was swept from stern to stern by something like half a gale. Far to the northeast soared a great avonnet, silver-white as if covered with dust.

"I wonder if that isn't the *Rex*?" queried Virginia.

Theodore was too busy with his levers and wheels to look. "If it is," said he, "and she comes about this place, we'll show her what real aviation is. What's that over on the freshwater lake? A party?"

"There's a launch," replied Virginia, "and three men and a woman coming across to our beach."

"Excuse me, probably," answered Theodore. "Let's give them something to remember!"

It was now that the Virginia made her swift sweep across the lagoon to the lake, hovered over the heads of Craighead and his companions, and bore off to the eastward like a hunting pigeon. They on the ship could not recognize their newly-arrived friends, nor hear Craighead's wild shout of triumph. They were far down toward Perdido Bay, flying like a driven leaf, Virginia gazing at Carson with something like fear in the admiration which now possessed her, as he tried every combination of factors in flight which he could conjure up.

"She's as near perfect as a machine can be," said he, "more nearly so than I ever hoped. You see, I had so much time to work things out while I was waiting for the money. You don't know what this means to me, Psyche!"

"I believe I can partly guess," said she. "Money—that's something!"

"But an uncertainty," observed Theodore. "The power of the Shogun people may ruin me commercially."

"Maybe," said she. "After living with the Shoguns as I did I can understand that better than you can; but they can't take from you the glory of achieving what the race has been trying so long, and dreaming of so much longer. You're a great man, indeed! That's the real thing!"

"It was," said he, "but it isn't now. Can't you understand, mate, that there may be some one living whose approval means more than any fame? I want you to."

Now there's nothing in the word "mate," applied to the sound in command, that need call the blush to the cheek, ordinarily speaking, but when the word is uttered in the most meaning way, and emphasized by a long look into the mate's eyes out of two lingering orbs that speak calm and comets and ruddiness, a young person, however experienced in the ways of eyes and voices, may possibly blush. If she does, she may turn her eyes downward, and in looking over the rail of an air-ship she may see an extraordinary thing below, and make a diversion by calling attention to it.

"Oh, look, look!" said Virginia. "There's some one in the water."

Below floated the hull-collapsed and sinking "go-devil" of a submarine. Beside it lay a great blotch of darkness, so symmetrical that Theodore was impressed with the sudden idea that it was a submarine rather than a patch of dark mud. A man on the deck was struggling, shuffling, and waving a white cloth as if in distress. If he could not swim he was doomed. Theodore's eyes flashed. Here was a test of the Virginia for which he had laid no plans, and he welcomed it. He reversed the thrust of the wing-propellers, and in an instant they were fighting the air with all the power of the mighty engines. The passengers felt their bodies away forward with the momentum, as the ship dove up, haled, and moved astern, and as accurately as if he had had years of practice, Carson brought her to over the struggling

man, and lowered her slowly, slowly, toward the swell which rose to meet her, until the line thrown over by Carson dabbled in the water by the customer's side.

"Can you climb up?" cried out Theodore. "I don't dare come much lower."

"For God's sake," called the man, "hurl her down a foot or so! I'm too weak to climb."

"Climb up!" called Theodore. "It's risky, but I'll try."

The man, who looked forward, as if to control his features, or from weakness, was apparently in great distress, and in terror from the fact that his collapsible shell was half deluged as if by the bursting of her air-chambers. If he was to be saved there was no time to be lost, so thought Carson as he depressed the Virginia more and more, holding her stationary by a slight windward thrust of the wing-blades, a foot quite beyond the power of any other air ship, and speaking to the man in the water, as well as to him in the air, the triumphant success of the new machine. Winner set his teeth in a fierce determination to put both man and ship out of the field at once. The thing became immense to him, swelling as the astounding behavior of the Virginia grew upon him. He was the sole custodian of the secret of her construction, save for Carson. If he could drown her, and master the secret of the glass globe, he could rebuke her, make his terms with Shapne, be the greatest in his line.

The lower works of the air-ship descended almost to his head, and Winner, glancing upward, saw Virginia looking down and singing out their aerial "soundings." The small lifted Winner as the Virginia sank to her lowest, and he seized the nacelle with fierce energy, drew himself up into the framework, threaded a steel chain through an opening in the structure, and dropped back into the water, holding the chain in his hand. It was around the aluminum beam with a sharp rapping, startling rattle.

"He's fallen in!" cried Virginia. "He climbed up under, and fell off! Oh, he'd drown, he'd drown!"

Theodore looked over the side. A small double chain ran down from the air-ship, its ends moving about in a most mystifying manner in the sea. And as he looked in astonishment the dark black of steel rose to the surface and defined itself as the rounded top of the Sticksback, on the black hull of which sat Winner blowing brine from his

mouth, his head shining with water. The manhole opened, Winner snatched the chain into a ring, slipped into the submergence, and disappeared with something small and flat in his hand.

"It'll fix you, you damned whelp!" he yelled. "It'll show you what it means to choke me! Take that!"

He swam at Carson, fired, and the bullet rang away into the sky. Theodore seized Virginia in his arms, and drew her down into the bottom of the car, where they lay panting in each other's arms, panic-stricken.

"I must put the ship out of range!" cried Carson, leaping to the level, and throwing on full speed upward and ahead.

She rose like a feather, for just a moment, and then the rising about like a kite with its string broken. Carson stepped to the side again and looked over. The ship hung some thirty yards above the water, and swinging backward and downward ran the steel chain looped through her works and fastened by both ends to the submarine. The harsh, nervous laugh of Winner rose with horrid significance from the Sticksback's manhole, which was again above water and open.

"Don't be in a hurry!" he shouted. "Stick around with us a while! We're going out where it's deep. Come in, the water's fine! Got your bathtub-suit? If you haven't you'll have to let us lend you some. Hurry to accommodate a lady, but we're going out where that chain won't put you up to high out of water. When she draws short, telephone down. Don't yell, for they won't so can hear you. They won't so can hear either of you again in this world, except just you two. By-by! See you in Davy Jones's—drown you!"

And with this, as if pulled down from below, the man vanished into the dark interior, the manhole closed, and the chain, like a line taken by some unseen fish, started out to sea. The air-ship had been captured by the submarine! The mechanical devil-fish was not raising very deep, her round deck rose smooth sometimes, but with the manhole closed, and with no sign, save the motion of her periscope, that she was more than an inert mass of steel, she swam on, remorseless, silent, the evil element in a battle unperceived and unreasoned of.

Still seated where Theodore had placed her, Virginia looked at him in questioning terror. He was white and hoarse, but he

was managing the air-ship with a set determination to save her and her freight if possible. At this moment he was depressing her in her flight to get all possible slack in the chain, so that by a sudden upward rush he might break the tether. Once, twice, thrice he did this, but the chain held.

"What is it, Theodore, what is it?"

"I don't know," said he, "but I think it's the end."

He was not looking at her, he was looking upward, like a man seeking some sort of inspiration. His expression seemed to say that there was work to do, and as long as every tick of the watch might make the difference between death and life, he had no time for her questions. She stood looking out over the great desolate sea, and back to the receding shore, on which she saw a group of forms—the forms of their friends. Nothing could seem more helpless. They were chained to their fate—a dark fated of a machine that was taking them out to sea, to deeps profound enough to drown them. It might be an hour, it might be the next moment, but the insupportable cruelty of the plan by which they had been snared took away all hope of its abandonment by the demons who had devised it.

Carson stood over her with a pistol in his hand. She looked up in wonder, thinking of those cases in which men tell the women they love, rather than allow them to fall into the hands of ruffians.

"Virginia, can you shoot?" he asked.

She took the pistol with the air of one who knew how to use it, and nodded her head.

"I shall have to ask you to protect me," said he, "while I try to cut that chain. They can see what I'm doing with the periscope, and when it is necessary they will come up into the open and shoot. By pulling out to sea, I can get her at an angle that will force them into the open to shoot. When the machine opens shoot into it. Keep them back. If you should hit one of them, don't let it trouble you, you—"

"I shall kill one of them if I can," said she. "Never mind that. Tell me the things to do."

"I shall take pliers and a file," said he. "I don't think the pliers will cut it. It will take quite a while to file it. Even if I can hang on that long, I may be too weak to climb back. I don't know what I can do it, anyway. You must take us back if I cut loose."

"I will," said she. "Never fear, I can do it. I know every lever."

"There's another thing," said he. "We came out with only a little gas. If we go much farther, we haven't enough to get us back with. I shall have to be the judge of that for you. I think I could save her in with the aeroplane set of the blades, but I don't know. I think we had better fly low going back, and not waste fuel in a vertical lift. That takes power. Keep her gliding about a hundred feet from the water, but if you want the aeroplane set, this is the way to fix it."

With a swift movement he showed her the way to manage the mechanism. Then he stopped her to tell him how to turn, how to rise, how to fall, how to vary the speed, how to determine the thrust of the blades. He hushed a pair of pliers about his neck with a hush, thrust a couple of files into his pocket, took off his boots, his coat and waistcoat, pulled his little cap's visor far down over his eyes to shelter them from the glass, and stepped to the side.

"You may get ashore," said he, "while I may not. If so, goodbye, and God bless you, dearest."

She threw her arms about his neck and kissed him over and over again—he felt her warm tears on his lips. But he controlled himself sternly, almost fiercely.

"Don't cry," said he. "Clear your eyes, and shoot straight. Good-by!"

She stepped to the rail and looked steadily at the black shadow like a gigantic fish that represented the submarine. Carson had disappeared over the side, in a terrifying hand-under-hand descent, until he reached the framework of the nacelle, where he crouched, now, trying his pliers on the chain. The submarine seemed in no way interested, at first, but presently her black shadow grew more distinct, the round deck broke water, and as the manhole opened Wimmer appeared and aimed at Carson, coolly as at a target.

Too hastily, Virginia fired, the bullet struck the edge of the deck with a vicious snap. Wimmer's pistol spoke, his bullet struck solid, flew upward away, and the girl replied with the cold snap of this strange tank. She braved herself against the rail, aimed carefully at the middle of the mark presented by the villain below, and fired—fired with the cautious confidence the marksman feels when he has made a good shot.

Wimmer had just lifted his arm to fire again, but as it fell back as if struck down by a giant's blow, he dropped back into the

darkness, the machine closed, and the submarine went on toward deep water as gently as before.

"All right down here," sang out Carson. "How are you on deck?"

"All right here," said she. "Do you think they'll shoot any more?"

"No," said Theodore. "But watch the machine just the same. I shall have to tie the chain. The piers won't do."

The girl waited. It was well for her that she had something to do, otherwise her reason might have given way. She stood by the rail with the pistol in her hand, listening to the squeak of the life on the chain. Suddenly this sound stopped, and she heard Carson calling.

"They're here to," said he. "I think they're going to try drowning us here. Don't lose control of yourself. Remember, this is a fight, and we aren't whipped yet. Do you hear?"

"Yes," said she. "But it's so awful! So awful! If you were only up here where you could—Tell me what to do! Tell me what to do!"

"Do you see how the chain shortens?" asked Carson. "She's going down. If the water's deep enough she can drown us, unless we can overcome her gravity. Turn the water on us to show a dead-down thrust of the blades, and then full power on the last speed. It will take fuel, but it's the only way. Hurry!"

The sub-stop tank, tank, nearer and nearer to the water, but without waiting to learn how the girl was carrying out his orders, Carson again attacked the chain, and the dull squeak of the life gripped Virginia's ears again, as she turned the indicators and threw on the power. As they had never done before, the great engines purred, the wing-blades roared about with a terrific roar, but with remorseless action like hers the submarine drew her down, down, closer to the water, and the vessel lost. The sinking was slow, now; but nevertheless more and more of the chain disappeared in the sea every moment. Virginia looked and despaired. The water was so terrifyingly near. Death in their cold depths seemed so antipathetically horrible. She turned her face in her hands. And the squeak, squeak, squeak of the life kept on with the regularity of a machine. Carson was at work. He might be drowned; but when he went under he would go fighting. He was a man! And suddenly Virginia felt herself

strengthened and comforted. Death was due everyone at some time. Why not now? Why whimper and shrink from what must be met?

She stepped to the side and called to him. "I think," said she, "that we are doomed. Is there anything I can do?"

"You might advance the spark," said he. "Not much. Just the least trifle. Yes, I reckon they've got us."

She sprang to the machinery and did this last thing ordered by her commander—did it with unshaking hands, as a soldier might take up the weapon of his comrade at his post. By the faintest trifle she advanced the spark, and went to the side to see the effect. They were lower now, and the trans-work in which Carson hung meant he in or near the crest of the waves, but the squeak of the life went on—not so strong, perhaps, but steadily still, the paces of the unconquerable spirit of the man clinging to the trans-work beneath her. It was queer! It was immense! Her spirit rose to the occasion, rose to the frantic grating of a life in a hand that was gibbering in the waves at every lifting swirl of the scaled gull that rolled on just the same where its prey dangled within the lapping of its tongue, and was ponder where, perhaps, no man had been since creation's morn.

"Theodore!"

The life stopped for a minute.

"Keep her as she is," said he. "We've got the submarine stopped. I've got the chain about tied through, but—I'm a little tired. Keep her as she is—for just a little while."

Again the life began its work. The immediate danger was over, but both the men below and the girl in the air knew that the terrific consumption of gas in the engines made the seconds too precious for use in conversation. A minute's supply of gas, ten seconds' supply, one second's supply, might save their lives in the tense stretch, when the chain should be tied through, and they should take their flight toward land—to make triumphant landing after this deadly peril, or to sink in the waves from which they were now fighting to save themselves. The roar of the machinery filled the air with suspense, the wind from the wing-blades drove down on the water set it boiling like a whirl-pool; one moment the upspringing submarine drew them down by a link or two of the chain, the next the struggling air-ship lifted the submarine up an inch or so from her

dark hole in the depths. At last, at the very height of the fierce struggle, the airship shot upward with the jangle of dropping chains, a worn life fell into the foam of a white-capped wave, and the girl leaped to the levers in obedience to the voice of Carson telling her to make haste, and set the wings for a forward flight, to cut the speed down one-third, and to steer straight for shore.

She did so. They had risen to a height of perhaps two hundred feet before her inexperienced hands could change the propulsion; and Carson told her to keep the height. She asked if she might not use a little higher speed, but he said no, the economy in gas was in the moderate speed.

"Can you come up?" she asked. "Have you the strength?"

She asked this two or three times, and got no reply. Suddenly she screamed with fear that he had fainted, and as if aroused from a stupor he asked her to advance the spark a little, and, when she had done so, to retard it again.

"Are you in danger?" she asked. "Can you hang on?"

"I'm all right," said he, "only my hands. Can you see shore? Is it far?"

The shore was rising fast, she told him. It was not so very far now, but the gas was almost gone. Could she do anything? Was there nothing to be done to rise it out so as to bring them a little closer before they fell into the sea? Could he do anything if he were in the car?

"Keep her as she is," said he. "When we get close enough to the coast glide in, I'll lighten her."

"How lighten her?" she asked.

"It's easy," said he, "from down here. Keep her as she is."

The dunes lifted white in the sun, shimmering in the heat, swelling as the Virginia darted nearer and nearer to shore. The horror-stricken people on the beach saw her coming, like an albatross before a gale. The girl on the deck prayed fervently for the miraculous reversing of the life crisis of oil foam which she made the gas which kept them up—and the man underneath hung on greedily, awaiting the creation of stroke which would prove that the machine which won the breath of the life of the great engine was exhausted at last. Once, twice, three, came

the halting in the machinery that was the death rattle of the motors.

"Virginia?" said he.

"Yes," she replied.

"Fix the gliding-mechanism. The gas is done."

"Yes, Theodora?"

"Turn her nose down a little. With momentum enough, she'll make it from here. And when she gets within those breakers, if she is less than twenty-five feet high, tilt her up again a little. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I'll do it. Anything more, Theodora?"

"No—only remember what you said about forgiving me, if I'd let you come with me. Remember, turn her prow up a little when she nears shore. You'll make it, dear, you'll make it."

Mrs. Graphall, standing on the shore, noted with the rest the new motion of the airship when the engines were stopped, and wondered why it behaved so queerly; and it was her eye alone that detected a man's form clinging to the trans-work under the car. This, she thought, was the person they had tried to rescue. She wondered when she saw the girl managing the machinery, which was so operated as to send the airship on a long, long, swift sweep down toward land. In across the line of breakers she came, the very swiftness of her descent making for her peril as she neared the waves.

And then Mrs. Graybill screamed. She had seen the man under the car deliberately let go his hold and drop into the water. The lightened car, tilted slightly upward now, as Virginia obeyed orders, moved slowly onward, rising a little as her momentum brought the great gliding surface against the air, and then, clearing the foam of the surf, she softly settled on the sand, with her stern rudder, like the tail of a great dead bird, washed by the hungry waves which she had, as by a miracle, escaped. And rising in from the offing where he had gone in his fishing-boat in the wild and improbable belief that he might help his master, came Captain Blurred, with a white-faced young man lying in the bottom of the boat, whose fingers dripped blood from the remorseless work of the life, while from the airship they took the scoreless form of the girl who had saved them the fear of death, and by sheer pluck had brought the Virginia into port.



THE VIRGINIA CAME IN CLOSE ASTERN, THEN SHEERED OFF AND DELIBERATELY RAN AROUND THE BIG CONDOR AS SHE STOOD ON HER COURSE AT FULL SPEED

("Virginia of the Air-Lanes")

Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Leigh

SOMEONE: Virginia leaves in the quest of her uncle, Finley Shayer, on his great air-ship, the *Rex*, which is hovering over the coast of Alabama. Orders on board say Max Silverberg, the wealthy head of the Fast-acted Mercile Concern, and an inventor named Winner. A trial of Winner's new helicopter—a type of small flying machine—is to be made. The invention of Silverberg, which, encouraged by Mrs. Shayer, he leaves upon Virginia, are sent hurriedly to the gall. In a spirit of fun she jumps herself in the car of the helicopter, and accidentally touching a lever falls into the air. After a thrilling flight through the air, the helicopter descends close to the edge of the water, the trailing power is caught by two men, and Virginia tumbles out upon the sand. Her rescuers prove to be Theodore Carson, a young Southerner, who is at work on a new idea in flying machines, and Captain Howard, a retired Gulf officer. After the girl has recovered from her shock, Carson tells her it is best to take the *Rex*, a boat by night. According to the word of the pilot for the following day, Shayer and Silverberg, he and Virginia's rescue from Captain Howard, who urges Shayer to see Carson. The air-ship he calls the *Carson*, Landing, the young man is invited aboard, and having agreed by Shayer he agrees to accompany them north to their home in Illinois.

Picking up Mrs. Shayer and Virginia, the *Rex* goes for Chicago. Silverberg becomes jealous of Carson and finally insists upon the alteration of making all an important business deal, that Shayer get the young man off. Theodore Shayer reluctantly tells Carson that his project does not interest him, and offers him money for the service of Virginia. Carson indignantly knows the truth soon from Shayer's hand, and being further excited by Silverberg, against a parachute which he has taken a lesson with him, and in Virginia's horror drops from the *Rex* into the dark city below. He lands safely in the grounds of Doctor Wadsworth's sanatorium for the cure of neuritis, where he has in an almost instant, a lawyer named Craghill, and being regarded for another patient in heavily detained and treated. When the management discovers the error it tries to induce Carson to sign a release for all claims, but Craghill strongly protests this and announces himself as Carson's attorney in a damage suit.

Having secured financial backing in the person of Mr. Waddy, Craghill's former "patron," Carson returns north to compete in his career. At Carson's Landing he finds Virginia. Secretly, she has sought refuge there thinking that no one, of whose identity she is ignorant, is her uncle. Carson declares here that a letter from Captain Howard informs him that Victor is trying to get on the air-ship calls him to the heart. Winner is unconsciously discovered, and, gliding vigorously, he is sent on board of a speeding submarine for purposes that are clear and deadly.

The air-ship is completed and makes an actual trip with Virginia, in the car with Carson. It is being everywhere when a struggling form is thrown in the water below. In unwilling to assist the man, who proves to be Winner, they are forced to leave him there, a sad victim to the Virginia and otherwise may be returning, that it does not mean to drop the air-ship under water. Carson succeeds in lifting the ship as the water laps the water beneath it, and Virginia with the new machine makes in a landing at the water's edge.

A RETREAT FROM BABELON

THE date when the *Virginia* left the shores of the Alabama coast for her first long voyage is now historic. It placed man, a flying animal, on an equality with the birds and bats and insects. It relegated the machines with which the world had attempted the conquest of the air to the limbo of abandoned things. The grasping of the scientist, the stretch of the law decade of the century, went the way of the tentative and imperfect. The new era is one of great flying machines beside which the *Virginia* would be as a halting-board to a hawk, but which are, every one, built on the *Virginia*'s principles—the direct thrust of the

blades and the balancing by the automatic distribution of power by means of light gyroscopes. The new hero was the remarkable young man who looked like one with his deathward, and manhandled the new machine like a woman—Theodore Carson. Every schoolboy knows these things.

But everyone does not know her difficulty in getting off. She cleared from her nest and struck out like a homing pigeon, but suddenly, as if by an elastic return ball cord, she returned to the launch of Mr. Waddy and Mrs. Craghill on the beachman lake.

"What's wrong?" inquired Mr. Waddy anxiously.

"My mental cage shifted," replied Craghill, head, from above. "The *Virginia* was

body and unaccountable. Had to get back."

"Skiffing says" symbolized the fact that Mr. Craighead had something to say—in which he passed from a forced business conversation to an exchange of barrels with Mrs. Graybill, cut short by Carson's meaning his flight. The wharves and strands of the hotels and villas were filled now with observers of the new sublimity of the sky. They saw her take her second flight northward, but again, with a sweep that filled them with admiration, she flut back to a position a few yards above the launch.

"The crew insisted," said Craighead, "but here we're. And we ought to work out this Brown idea a little more, Mr. Waddy."

"They ain't no use in comin' back for that," said Mr. Waddy. "I know our business as well as the next one. I'm handier' the West. You let me alone!"

"Assuredly, Michael," asserted Craighead. "Good-by, Mrs. Graybill!"

Again they flew northward; and again, within five minutes of losing the launch, Craighead demanded that Carson get back. "I would have conversed with Sir Cyrus Waddy," said he. "This time, I mean. My statistical harness has dug up the real item that I wanted to show him. Return, Sir Theod? Carson, Lord Mayor of Everywhere! Return to the launch!"

"No?" said Theodora. "We've vacillated enough—too much. I shall not return."

"But, I say, old chap," urged Craighead, "this is the latest, you know. Seriously now, Mr. Waddy doesn't know the first thing about my scheme for controlling Middle West space through titles to highways. I've got to talk with him. Come now, go back, or I'll hop into the bay and swim. I will go back. I'll scuttle the ship. I shall not sleep a wink. I'll be watchful unless I'm taken back. I'll buy a starting in the first poultry market, and teach the informal fowl to hullo in three ear! Back! Take me back!" I'm in earnest. The further we go the more things I think of to go back for. Take me——"

"For the last time!" Carson stipulated. "Do you promise?"

"Yes, good my word, this is the union trip I mean."

The Virginia darted like a meteor up the bay, swooped sharply over the Middle Bay Light, and dove once more into the hazy

light blue smokiness of San Sencio Bay, Craighead peering forward under the pretence of the low matter for the launch, as a globe-circling sailor might view the shore for his sailing wife. They went hurtling back over the Palmetto Beach hotels at a height of five hundred feet, and thence to the stately end of the Little Lagoon, the galleries were also with people, scanning the tremendously powerful flier with glasses. What was this thing hammering the sky in this amazingly simple fashion, so silent, so vigorous, so powerful in her swift sweep?

Craighead saw no launch in the black circle of the freshwater lake. "They're not on the lake, Carson!" he cried in panic. "What can have happened? Is it possible they've sunk?"

"Don't faint," said Carson. "They're in the narrow, hidden by the coves. We'll find them."

"I confess you've guessed it, Cap'n," replied Craighead, with a sigh of relief. "There they are now."

The ship followed the tortuous channel in a leeward of point of bushes might trace the windings of a rail-fence. In the sheltered pond which Carson called Virginia's by-bred, Mrs. Graybill was gathering water blossoms and piling them in the pilot's skibbins. When the low-flying aircraft came up again she grew crimson and laughed.

"Well," said Mr. Waddy, "I'll be damned!"

"We returned to say——" began Craighead.

"It was Craighead's dream," looks to Carson.

"Exactly!" asserted Craighead. "I desired a word with you, sir, on the Western highway——"

"No more of that!" cut in Mr. Waddy. "You gave Jiles the idea, didn't you?"

"I communicated the conception," said Craighead. "Yes."

"As I said him for an opinion on it?"

"You became obligated for it," said Craighead. "Fifty cents in payment on your case, but, legally, quite distinguishable."

"It's the same thing!" cried Mr. Waddy. "As the feller we here know more than a quarter-section of folks that don't know their own minds. Don't you come back ag'in, it harkens me like meekness! Go on!"

"Froreedy, most potentest one. There's a matter we haven't mentioned. How shall we jump forth the grand hauling sign of distress when I am far away?"

"They're still comin' to the main an' tele-

graphs, ain't they?" queried Mr. Waddy softly.

"Would you," asked Craghead, "place a world in pawn on the faith of a man-of-war, the fidelity of a telegraph system controlled by our lustreless enemies? As trustee in training, answer in the name of our patron saints, St. Henry Morgan and Jesus James!"

"We agreed on a cipher," snapped Waddy. "Geez, an' we it."

"Cipher?" scoffed Craghead, who had devised it himself. "Not with the Shagor boards on Carson's train? Why, any cipher can be deciphered. Go back to the time of Bacon——"

"Well, if you stay much longer," cried Mr. Waddy, "we may as well go back to the time of Ham as Bacon. What you driven' at, anyhow?"

"Your pungent play on words," said Craghead, "gives me joy. It proves my power to corrupt. Last spring you'd have been incapable of it. I'm driving at the necessity of a trusty messenger who will do rather than disclose, will swallow blue-prints to keep them from the enemy, will explode a magazine before admitting a traitor even unto an tale of contents. I know one such."

"Who?" asked the puzzled Waddy.

"Your beautiful daughter. Give her a running schedule per ten-hour train between Chicago and New York, bringing your messages and returning with ours until victory is won! Eh?"

Mrs. Greyball leaned back and laughed until she was crimson of face and teary of eye. "It won't do," she said. "I never could eat blue-prints. Anyone can deceive me——"

"Then I've some hope," said Craghead. "That's worth coming back for?"

"Use the results, now advanced fellow," she went on. "Goodbye! Take him away, Mr. Carson; and return with your shield or on it, Mr. Craghead. Oh, you—ha, ha, ha, ha——"

"This sipping ha-ha, for one," said Craghead severely, "would be atrocious from a less scantly pharynx. But I leave——"

The car was not in two for an upward and forward lurch, at the last speed. The launch was left alone in the great marsh, with Mrs. Greyball, her color high, her mouth occasionally curving into a smile—sometimes culminating suddenly—punctuating Japanese flower-arrangements, while her father coughed his board with his fingers and said nothing.

Passing over the bay with a wide monstrous detour, the Virginia came in over Spring Hill, and alighted softly at the second landing at Mobile. From a hundred self-appointed a throng of people, attracted by the strange craft that had made port, the eagerest, forming a black ring about the car, stared with white eyes. The whites then assumed the advantageous position, rather ashamed at the steady gaze of Carson and the evident amusement of Craghead.

"Howdy, folks?" said the latter. "Take a good look. For even when ye mot not, we watch. Out of the great deep we came, into the great deep we go. The elementals who used to awe the post-holiest spirits what these is. But a brief space have we to warn Mobile. Repeat! Repeat! Yet a few mo' days an' Mobile shall be done destroyed!"

"Stop, Craghead!" said Carson. "Don't pay an attention to what he says——"

"They won't," implied Craghead. "They'll do just the same the minute we're gone. Even an angel from heaven, which he be it from me to claim——"

"Don't threaten," said Carson in an old voice with a whip in his hand, "come here!"

"Yes, Mistah Carson," responded the negro.

"Fetch me at once one Number Two can of A-quality methanol, and get me a lot of the new-stamp chemicals for the past two days."

"Yes, sah!"

Thomas darted away, and Carson began testing his machinery for another flight.

"Pardon me," said a man who had a withered arm drawn up to his side in such a way as to give out the impression that he was holding his breath, "but are you going far, so short-handed?"

"Not far in time," replied Theodore.

"Only to Alaska," added Craghead. "We must a Russian admiral at Saint Michael at three. If that rigger doesn't hurry we shall be late, General, and what will Admiral Filanokovitch say then?"

The man lifted his stiff hat, bowed politely, and stepped back, unveiling a face beamed him which Carson knew, the long, suspicious face of Warden. Carson stooped as if for some crucial purpose, laid hold of a quatern, and spoke to Craghead, low, distinctly, intensely.

"I'm going to get a man in the crowd. Guard the crowd!"

"All right," said Craghead, who had no

idea of his full meaning, "but hurry back. Remember the admiral!"

With the speaker in his hand, Carson rose, and with a light leap he stood in the midst of the crowd, which parted, leaving him in an open space. Warner had fled, but through the thinned crowd Theodore saw his wiry figure, with the arm that Virginia's bullet had reached hanging in a sling, daring behind a building as if running from death itself. With his hand on his hip, Carson gave chase. Some one cried, "Stop him!" and an officer, seeing in Carson the only fugitive in sight, stopped him.

"Let me go," cried Carson, struggling. "Come with me and arrest a man for attempt at murder. Come."

"That cock won't fight!" answered the policeman. "Good doggie, but won't go with me. What's he done?" he inquired, bringing Theodore back.

Nobody seemed to have any definite complaint to make. "He jumped out of his ship," said one, "and acted like he was going to brain some one."

"Did he brain anyone?" asked the policeman.

"No," replied the Mobster; "but he might."

"If he had met anyone with brains," said Craghead, "to act as the corpus delicti. A brain requires a brain—a term connecting brain. Advocate Diabolo, thy case is weak."

"Well," laughed the policeman, "he had a right to jump, lookin' at once as he pleased."

"But he ran off," persisted the "Advocate Diabolo," "as if pursuing some one—"

"Or trying to get somewhere," supplied Craghead. "Aren't people here allowed to hurry? Have you ordinances against haste, O Guardian of the Realm? What's the speed limit for pedestrians in Mobile, anyhow?"

A boy in a messenger's cap interpreted the colloquy, calling, "Mr. Carson!"

"I'm Carson," said Theodore. "What do you want?"

"Somebody on the wire for you at the telephone booth in the hotel," replied the messenger. "Wanta you at once."

"May I go?" asked Theodore of the policeman.

"For all of me," replied the officer. "I don't want you."

Wondering who might be in Mobile doing things with him, Carson said, "Who's this?" into the transmitter.

"Your old friend Warner," said a voice. "Come on now! Never mind where I am, I'll tell that after I've talked, if you want me to—you jay!"

Carson glanced into the receiver with confusion and lips drawn back unconsciously, then hastily returned it to his ear, and caught the middle of a sentence about smuggling.

"I didn't get that," said Carson.

"Well, you'll get it," said Warner, "if you ain't careful. You can have me pitched, but I can prove an alibi. And while I'm proving things I'll let you fellows be smuggling, and put Harold where the dogs won't bite him—and you, too!"

"I don't know anything about smuggling," protested Theodore.

"Well," went on Warner, "dig into the big steel hull with the steel buoy on it, and you will. You'll find what'll put you in a better trade than putting me in prison for fruits with your arrest. Oh, don't talk so innocent. How did you finance your air-ship except by free trade?"

Carson had nothing to say. He remembered Captain Harold's expression when Warner had called him an "old smuggling fool." He remembered a thousand mysterious things, now plain by the hypothesis of Harold's having yielded to the constant temptation of smuggling. That the old man he loved should be guilty of a felony was bad, but to be in Warner's power was worse. Then thought Carson while Warner waited for his reply, uttering into the instrument a dry, sinister, unexpressed challenge.

"Lost your tongue?" he wanted. "Well, arrest me! Anyone knows where I am, but will the girl leave Silberberg to come and testify? The courtship's just getting good, now; too bad to disturb 'em!"

Carson batted the receiver away and strode back to the Florida, looking even more formidable than when he leaped over her side. As he stood through the crowd, he found the negro with two men hoisting the can of methane closed.

"What about those secret clearings?" he asked.

"Byd's a paper they give me," said Thomas. "I reckon it's in that."

The sailings were not many: the *Terr* for Memphis, the *Long Tom* for Saint Andrews Bay, the *Phyllis F* for Montgomery, and, yes, the *Rex*, departing the morning before, for northern points. Carson threw the paper away, and Craghead picked it up.

"We can overhaul the *Toro*," said he, with a jaded air. "at, say Jackson, and take our friends for Alaska. I do hope the President can join us at Omaha. Gentlemen," addressing the crowd, "here you see a new avenue created by me by reaching Alaska before nightfall, we win a million dollars. This is a sure thing, as the sun will not set there for three months—the bar is with a Brazilian who lingers about the day's coming quarterly at Nome. But we shall be honorable and pay him the million on the spot if we fail to make it before sunset in Rio, the real time is gone. Tomorrow we shall win five hundred thousand from Rothschild, by leaving Greenwich Observatory at sunrise, going west, and returning at sunrise next day from the east—circling the world in twenty-four hours of continued action. With us well, gentlemen! Good-by, honest prosperity, your country's pride, good-by!"

The majestic rise of the *Virginia*, with its preliminary run, drew a round of applause. Craghead waved his cap, but Carson, saying no attention, laid the course dead for New York.

Carson's manner, or the parting at the narrow, depressed Mr. Craghead's marauding spirit, and they were far up the *Alakana* delta before he spoke, and was rebuffed by Carson's refusal to explain his effort to "get" the man in the crowd. They flew high; and the constant picking up and dropping of railway trains and steamers, and the swift succession of villages and towns, spoke of the *Sacrosanct* with which the ship was hurled against the leagues between Maine and New York. They left Montgomery in port and Atlanta in harbor. Carson had assigned Craghead his duties, and both were busy, Craghead at the tiller with his eye on the compass, Carson looking at every working part, oiling, feeling for hot bearings, watching for the slightest quiver or jar, greedy of every mile. He was trusting on too hard for new machinery, he knew that, but he never hesitated, and it was only after they had won through to the mainland and were speeding along over the great National Appalachian Forest that he released Craghead.

That gentleman stood up, beamed a sigh of relief, and waved his hand to the northeast west, where ferry catamaran clouds buttressed the horizon with masses of pearl. "Another hour of that," said he, "would have made the point of the compass a subjective vision for

sure. I can see 'E. N. E.' and 'N. E. by N.' on every promontory of your clouds. And now, sir, as it please thee, I'll get luncheon—if luncheon it can be called that costs less than fifty cents per jack-knife. *Aloha!*"

In the little locker were found the elements from which Craghead prepared the luncheon on the methanase stove. Carson listened to the engines as a phonician to heart-throbs, glancing from the compass to the mounting domes of clouds in the north and west.

"We shall get into upper Atlantic regions," said he, "just in time to let the seas of local storms tonight."

"Tornadoes?" queried Craghead, pointing out the amber coffee.

"Maybe," smiled Carson. "Severe local storms always mean possible twisters."

"Well," replied Craghead, "what do we care? I've got me umbrellas, ye know."

"That makes us safe," replied Carson. "But the worst we need look for is a good hard thunder-shower, but I'd rather make my first landing in Manhattan in fair weather."

"It's equally there with me as soon as I know 'is," answered Craghead. "Come to grab."

Carson looked from the tiller to the compass, and hesitated. He had never tried losing the *Virginia* before her nose with the tiller locked. "Of course," said he, "she'll fall off, but if she turns I can put her back on her course. I believe I'll try her."

"Do," urged Craghead. "With this farrow, she oughtn't to run aground. She's not movable by heart-throbs and subjective perceptions. She'll go back, if she can."

"She'd go straight on," replied Carson. "I wouldn't need to lock the tiller."

"The galling slowness of the crew," said Craghead, "doesn't allow his telephones to back the additional brains of the captain. Have some of the milk, while the *Virginia* chases her tail above Mr. Packer's forest."

"She doesn't chase her tail much," replied Carson. "So far, at least."

She did not. The gyroscopes held her on an even keel, and the altimeter-statorscope delivered the verdict that the *Virginia* was following a course as level as a battle ship's. The compass trembled about the point where Carson set it, as the ship's made minute deviations with changes in the air-currents, or momentarily lost coordination of the engines, at once corrected by the synchronizer. She was holding her course as level as ever, away up there in the blue, thus a schooner with locked

below would have done in the steadiness of breezes. Carson ate, watched the triumphant rest, and forgot to dream.

Save for wings of cirrus clouds miles above them the sky was clear. Peak after peak, range after range, village after village came hurrying toward them from the northeast, passed beneath like visions, and fell into the wake of mangled things. The great features of the landscape—the lake-like reservoirs in which were stored the waters that in former years had desolated the valleys with floods, but now were stored to inundate the next time low water and to turn the laboring wheels of heavy dams; the bright green areas of young fern where the old washed-off mountainsides had been refloated; the far-off burning lands, brown in the unweathered spring or green with the emerald of winter wheat; and the valleys, ranges, and plateaus which lay, as distant as a relief-map—all these impressed themselves on the minds of the voyagers as the streets of a village on that of a stranger.

"I used to think it quite a trick," said Craighead, "for the birds to find their way north in spring, but please! I could do it in the night. A continent is as simple to a quarter-section. The poem isn't so much what than I as I always thought. If Mr. Bryant had come with us he'd never have written 'To a Waterfowl.' There'd have been no mystery in the goose's certain flight, up here where he sees two things."

"See that big stratus cloud?" asked Carson.

"Shall we go over or under it?"

"Personally," replied Craighead, "I've been under a cloud enough."

The stratus was an immense vapor-sheet half a mile above the earth. Underneath was the gloom and dullness of cloudy weather; but above it the sun shone with a brightness suggested by the brilliancy reflected from the upper surface of the cloud, as from a great glittering plain of snow. The sun was past the meridian, and shining warm; but on the wing, over that great expanse of pond, the air felt not cold, but "calmer," and they put on their top-coats. Fields of cumulus clouds, five miles above the vaporous plain, were dignified on it by their own misty shadows, like great clusters of foliage silhouetted on an illimitable ground of wool. The shadow of the Virginia ran with her across the cloud, like a black hat, behind in the unspectable glory of a single rainbow which ranged the wailing shadow about in three

concentric circles as bright, as effulgent as day, as gleaming in their mingling lines, that the voyagers, glancing from audience to radiance, lowered their voices at the thrill of a beauty too massive for speech.

The immense engines were moving with the regularity of clockwork, keeping the pledge of their makers that, if supplied with fuel and oil, they would run without a single stop until worn out—the perfection of the internal combustion engine, once so unimpeachable. Craighead, past the first surprise of the beauty of the cloudscapes, looked down at the three rainbows which trailed behind them now like rings of lambent fire, and examined the work.

"This is, to call it a phase," said he, "rather, rather? Where are those right angles that make up the peculiar alignment of the American landscape? Where are the straight lines that constitute soil beauty? And was a patent medicine or breakfast food sign as far as we can see. Rotten! When we own these lanes we must have improvements. Instead of those disgusting rings of color, we must lay everything off in rectangular blocks, and put up signs advertising such any line, magnificent view—in human addition to New-Brville. Hey, Gaird!"

"I'm glad," said Carson, "to get slave profits. Thank heaven, clouds can't be commercialized!"

"Can't, eh?" asked Craighead. "You have made good with this machine, I'll have to admit; but you lack financial resourcefulness. I've got to dig out the by-products of the company myself. One of them has just occurred to me. We'll lease out for captive balloons all along our lanes of licensed navigation, and sell the rights to those ads for Johnson's Gum Drops on the shining levels of the cloud floor. It can be done by a simple mechanism—if it isn't invented, I'll invent it in an odd moment. And we'll sell exclusive rights to those colored pictures of Edna May and Senator Clark's house and moving pictures of the great Sage-Brush Ben House Railway on the thunder-clouds in chumatum with grouse at Peterson's Hunstary Farm and Hapworth's Innestidge. Why, hang you, whitey youth, let me out while I work those things up, right now?"

"I'll go down, and show you where you'll drop," said Carson, "but I can't stop."

"Going down? Floor below?" asked Craighead. "Wherefore, O brave shipper?"

"I want to see where we are," said Carson.

"This is like the open ocean. I want to compare the map with the landscape."

Obedient to the tilted rudders, the *Figynia* pointed her prow downward, her propeller blades harked her swiftly forward and toward the north, and they plunged into the cold stream of the stratus cloud, into mist and white scarves of icy fog and the uneasy obscurity of an aerial blizzard. Craghead gasped at the chill and the blindness.

"King for a guide," said he. "I'm lost!"

He was not lost for long, for the *Figynia* dove the fleecy hoodwink, and emerged through its lower levels into the clear shadows of the upper air. They could feel the warmth radiated from the ground, balmy with early sunsets. The landscape was utterly changed. Far off to the west was the blue line of the highlands, their peaks lost in haze. Below were farms planted in corn and wheat and tobacco, from which came up the lowing of cattle, the crowing of cocks, and, most distinct of all, the barking of dogs. Far to the northeast lay a shining river, swelling into a broad estuary; and just within sight could be discerned the clustered spires and towers of a city. Carson looked the landscape over and studied his map.

"I wonder if it's possible," said he, "that that's Richmond?"

"If so," screamed Craghead, "let me adopt Mr. Greeley's war-cry, 'On to Richmond!' But, to coin an expression, what's the matter of its being Philadelphia? It's so peaceful under its atmosphere of Quaker drab. But if not the City of Brotherly Graft, let's have it Richmond!"

"But it must be the James!" said Carson.

"Craghead, we've made Richmond three hours quicker than I thought it possible. A stick or a Canada goose couldn't have crossed the distance—and they sometimes go two hundred miles an hour! Why—"

"Let us craft over you insufferable plate," cried Craghead. "Let's fly rings around 'em! They've been the lords of the heavens all winter in some place where unassured wealth is spent in unmitigated prostration in search of unattained joys—let's show 'em how it looks to drop back with the rack of absolute and take the sweat of our methusens. Run a little extra oil into the cylinders so they'll crackle and sputter to heaven—and let's sail circles around the smoke!"

Craghead, wearing the southeast with his field-glasses, had discovered a huge otherside aircraft steaming northward at a distance of

six or seven miles, and to its passengers he referred with many gestures. Carson massed his binoculars on her and grew tense as he looked at sight of a distant wall. The aircraft was of the *Candor* type and of the largest size, with two rudders, and along her side ran the line of a veridical aeroplane. Still at the same unheard-of speed, Theodore drove over the filler and made her for air-dock. Craghead looked at him in wonder.

"Why so old-fashioned, O Knight of the Cragged Countenance—all so suddenly?"

"That ship looks like the *Rec*," said Carson, advancing the park and crowding the engine until the wind of light swept the aircraft like a gale.

After a few moments on a straight course to intercept the aircraft, Carson threw the *Figynia* up into the cloud. As the earth was blotted from sight he compared the direction of the aircraft with the points of the compass, making calculations as to the distance and the speed of the two ships, and in another moment they emerged on the shining upper levels of the cloud, which, like a shimmering screen between the two ships, hid their approach to each other. One below the curtain and one above it, the airship of the future and the airship of the past flew on converging courses. Carson held his watch as it ticked off the time for five or six miles of distance, set the rudders for a downward dip, plunged through the cloud for the third time, and darted downward out of the vapor like a rock into a chimney.

They looked about and saw nothing. The aircraft was invisible. And yet, above the purring of the machinery, came to their ears the tremor from powerful engines, the whirring of screws close at hand. Could the *Rec* have ascended into the cloud as they descended from it? It was possible; but the sounds were approaching, not receding, and voices now mingled with the sound of machinery—voices coming closer and closer.

"My God, Carson!" shouted Craghead. "You're going head of her. Look down!"

Just in time Carson looked. From the clear depths of air before, the great bubble of silver rose, swelling to her with approach. A collision meant ruin for the aircraft, and probable destruction to the *Figynia*. The propeller blades of the aircraft would cut the envelope of the gas-holder like paper, and the two ships, in a huge mass of tangled wreckage, would fall to the earth and ruin; or the escaping gas from the aircraft, ignited from the

exhaust of the *Virginia's* engines, might explode, leaving the fragments of both vessels far and wide—and Carson saw in the race the true form of *Virginia's* doom, hurled in death and crushed to forevermore below.

There was no time to check their downward career; salvation for safety is a wish that to evade the racing peril. Quick as lightning Carson threw on full speed forward. The *Virginia* slowed her machinery, and as she stopped to the aircraft's starboard, the latter rose swiftly. The *Virginia's* stern rudder grazed the gas-bag and was all but carried away; a cord of the suspension system of the air-ship snapped with a detonation that set the huge fabric in a tremble; then rose a cry from the deck of the lighter unconscious minutes, as her people realized the fearful fact that here in these dizzy heights they were in collision with something. As the *Virginia* came in sight past the immense blimp her passengers saw white images turned upward to them, and as they slanted off a man came running out of the cabin with a gun in his hand as if with some wild notion of giving battle to the invisible destroyer which had swept upon them from the dizzy heights of the cloud.

The *Virginia* was half a mile from the air-ship before the crew of the latter had time to assure themselves of her safety. The great aircraft had not changed her course, but was still reaching on at the height of her speed toward Richmond—like a whale at which a swordfish has made a vicious slash and rebound. The *Virginia* went on as well as without the course of the other craft, and as she slowed to starboard, the aircraft and the aircraft sped from each other at the sum of their two speeds—perhaps four miles a minute. The people on the aircraft must have thought the other gone forever, when an astounding thing happened. The aircraft veered about and gave chase, so swiftly that she veered visibly in her path outwinding of the aircraft. In a time so short that it seemed like a flash the *Virginia*, on a level now with the other's deck, came in close skirts, then sheered off and deliberately ran around the big *Condor* as she stood on her course at full speed. At the crowd on the lower air went out from the great ship's engine-room—a cry of mingled fear and astonishment—astonishment that one aerial craft dared go herself across a speeding *Condor's* bows, fear of a collision, and the dread which comes to those who see themselves in the power of another.

Why did this new craft so cruise about them? It was some new engine of aviation, that was sure. And with such incredible speed and such unsketch of mobility, what more probable trade could open to her than the aerial hunting and spoiling of the aircraft, with their passenger lots of themselves?

So as Carson came up on his second circumnavigation of the *Condor* there stood at the rail of the big air-ship crew on these men with guns, who made threatening gestures and seemed to him to stand off or they would shoot.

"What ship is that?" cried out Carson.

"Name of your business?" was the reply.

"You stand off or we'll shoot."

"Shoot, if you dare!" cried Carson.

"Don't you see that I can go above where you can't shoot and rip your gas-bag in perfect safety? Come now, answer my question. Why, confused as, if I wanted to do you any harm, don't you see you're in my power? Don't be silly!"

Something in the boy's tone reassured the aircraft. "This is the *Dreadnaught* of Spokane," was the reply. "What devilish thing is that?"

"The *Virginia*—of Carson's Landing in Alabama," replied Theodore.

"You will pardon us for our abrupt descent to your level," said Cringland severely. "Certainly, the *Virginia* prefers a higher plane. We were strictly in shadow a moment ago, and on mistaking our kind ourselves descending as you like a duck on a gas-bag. We trusted one of your suspension cords—for which we are sorry, but the gods bump into things when they come down from Olympus."

"Whose aircraft is that?" asked the man who seemed in command.

"It's mine," said Theodore. "I built her."

"Well," said the man, "you've got the world by the tail, and if you need money to swing it, just apply to Calvin J. Fry, of Spokane, if you've got clear title to the mechanism."

"Thank you," said Theodore. "I thought you might be an acquaintance. I think we'll leave you now."

"But wait," said Mr. Fry. "Let me handle your foreign rights. I can get next. I know the Japanese foreign minister, and China's looking for something like that. Hold on—Hollo, will you let a mechanical devil's darling-people like that loose on the *Dreadnaught* behind as if anchored? Hold on.



AS THE MAN MOUNTED THE LADDER, CRASHMAN REINED A CHAIR, AND DUMPED HIM HEAVILY INTO THE CURVE

please." But the Virginia, greatly increasing her speed, left the bustling Cobble J. Fry gasping after her out of hearing.

"That, to designate a location," said Craghead, "ought to hold them for a brief period. Looks as if they were back-pedaling."

"I will find her," said Carson, evidently meaning something else, "if they have hidden her in the furthest cove of that thunder-cloud!"

"Highly improbable, doesn't you know," suggested Craghead, "that they should select such a denotation inauspicious place for the young person. Doubtless we'll run across 'em in New York. By the way—dinner! I have the house to report that the ship is without grub and is starving."

"I shall not stop," said Theodore, "this side of New York."

"Very well, sir," said Craghead. "I will leave my land-bark. Doubtless I shall do very well with them. I suppose you see that we are battling into weather, dead ahead and on both beams?"

"Certainly. It's the area of local storms."

Just Richmond, there hit the densest Capital at Washington far to port, passed between Baltimore and Dover, and directly over Philadelphia, where Carson made a wide circle above the vast aerial harbor, scanning the harbor for a huge silver scow of the Con-air type, but finding none. It was growing dark, and the west and northwest were rumpeted with towering thunder-heads, quivering with lightning, toward which Carson hurried the Virginia like a bullet. The town-riddled air-lanes region of New Jersey swept under them as if driven by swift machinery, and the harbor of New York lay beneath, alive with shipping. The lights were already burning, and the far-spent Babylon of the modern world hung like a fairy dream from the foreground to the farther rim of the concrete cup of the earth. The custard-hued margin of the city stood incredibly lofty clear to the water's edge, reared so high in air as to challenge the air-ship itself in altitude. Carson was amazed and stunned. He had never seen New York, and his ideas were all inadequate to the actualities before him. The stars flashed into sight as the Virginia poured into positions permitting a view of the bottom of one metropolitan canyon after another—flashed into view at long lines of arc-lights and gorgeous electric signs, a perfectly unimagined tangle and jungle of lights of all

colors, and then the soaring craft would pass on, the streets would be revealed out to the tall buildings, the illuminated roofs and towering cliffs of lighted windows becoming a great plain of glimmering constellations. The boy was afraid—the huge city, roaring up at them like a seething beast, struck him with terror. It was so unreal, so distant, so like a gorgeous nightmare of in-craft human achievement, that it seemed unthinkable that it could hold for him single but danger and struggle, and, perhaps, death.

"Why don't circle about like a sand-hill crane?" said Craghead. "Why don't you light?"

"Like the sand-hill crane," replied Carson, "I'm afraid. Where can we alight?"

"Glad!" said Craghead, "I never thought of that! New York has always reached out for me so lovingly that the idea of there being any difficulty of getting into her audience never entered my brain. We are a little shy of knowledge of how to get in from above, aren't we?"

"What are the harbor rules?" asked Carson.

"Blasted if I know," replied Craghead. "The ground has always seemed adequate as a way in before. Can't you follow the crowd?"

"There's not an air-ship to be seen," said Carson. "They've been driven in by the night and the weather. Not safe to drop into any harbor we may happen to find!"

"But what are we to do?" cried Craghead. "It's coming on to storm. And I'm hungry! And there's the Great White Way beckoning. No more land!"

"No," replied Carson, "I'm afraid. And I think it better for all means to go out to the country, and come into New York by day. And that's what I'm going to do."

It was quite dark now, save for the moon, which, nearly full, was climbing the eastern sky, still clear. The line to the south and west would escape the storm for hours. To the northwest towered the pearl clouds pulphous with lightning. Craghead, complainingly according to his companion's plan of retreat from Manhattan until day, expected Theodore to turn the Virginia from local weather, to some far New Jersey village, and was astonished when he entered upon a terrific fight up the Hudson, which by shining in the moonlight, lined with the wakes of boats, far ahead, on both sides, quivered the lightning of the storm; and soon from afar came

the rumbling of thunder. Carson seemed to be seeking sight in the heart of a thunder-storm. Craighead seized his arm and tried to gleam something of his mood from a scrutiny of his face.

"I know from experience how impetive it is to ask about such aberrations," said he; "but may I inquire why you seem doomed to enter upon an unseemly frolic with the Storm King? No, by James, you've passed the Storm King, and you're headed for the Catskills—the conspicuous place for thunder and lightning in these parts. What about you?"

"I'm going to the Catskills," said Theodore. "Before I sleep, I'm going to find Shyne's Hole!"

STORMY NIGHT

With a complaining, mutinous crew, and a captain selfishly silent, the *Virginia* faced north along the Hudson with her cargo of hoppers and beans. Theodore, at the tiller, between glances at the compass and the chart, watched the silver ribbon of the river, braiding into the placid lake of Tappan Sea, contrasting to a thread between Fortkill and West Point, and lost altogether in a sheet of rain that roared down across Poughkeepsie.

"I never supposed," remarked Craighead, as they passed far east of West Point to escape the storm, "that I'd ever be able to look successfully down on this cradle of our nation's heroism and bulwark, which lost its chiefest jewel when it expelled me. Proud nest of warriors with indrawn stomachs, I swore yet if I knew where you were, within a league or so, I'd shake off the dust of my feet against ye. I laugh in your upturned face—ha, ha!"

Carson was still silent as he avoided the local shower that drenched the decks of the eight boats, joined its roar, crossed the Hudson in a slow debate at Kingston, and stood northwest toward heavy dense masses of towering clouds, veiled with increasing lightning, screening the high peaks of the Catskills—and Shyne's Hole.

"I'm distinctly for this trip now," cried Craighead. "Talk about excitement! Why, when before did man that is born of woman make a night fight into the whether, dodging thunder-storms by the way? What is more elevating than to cast contempt into the teeth of the elements by dancing up into the very front of a cloudburst, and getting away by superior foot-work? The watery kingdom

whose antithesis land splits in the face of heroes—why, it's modest and retiring by comparison with us! The armies of the tempest conspire against us, they compass us about, they stain their strength even as a heavy-weight boxer, they speak in thunder across the leagues, saying, 'Let the left wing advance forward, and the right wing hold the balls, while the center rushes in with the trampling charge of its wind and downpour—and we will get these mortals, good and plump!' And then we outflank them on the east and give them the comendous ha-ha, and hang on their rear threatening their communications with Medicine Hat and Kamloops, by James! And if they do surround us, we'll stir into the issue—and we'll war over the topmost domes of their encampment of destruction and dampness and stupefied electricity, and we'll drop down outside the lines—dry within and without! This is sport for a king or a hippopotami! Oh, oh, say I, and yet again, oh!"

"That's all right as pure fancy," replied Carson, "but if we ever get hemmed in among these storms, we'll not get out by going over them."

"Why not?" asked Craighead. "I'd not hear that there are limits to the achievements of this flying exclamation-point. For the prospect upon which I am mentally engaged must speak of the pleasure of torнадо-hitting and the following of the spoor of the typhoon and the aircon. Why not handle the tempest, *entire*?"

"Those highest towers," replied Carson, pointing to the thunder-heads now again snowy in the moonlight, "are thirty, forty, fifty thousand feet high."

"Well, what do we care?" protested Craighead. "It wouldn't hurt any more to fall that far than from where we are. Come, better logic, *arrabi*!"

"The upper parts," said Carson, "are snow and ice and frost."

"Better to feel a frost," said Craighead, "than to be one, Sir Duquoin. Come, thou'rt unharmed!"

"And the atmosphere up there," went on Carson, "is too rare for the *Virginia's* foothold or its breath. Before we'll get above those domes the engines could only keep her at a standstill."

"Then, no," said Craighead, "you have enlisted the great, safe, sane, and conservative Craighead in a wildest promotion of a machine in which to surround an ordinary

thunder-head we shall be successively stifled, frozen to death, and suffocated. Am I right, Colonel Carson?"

Carson was questioning the altimeter-stationer as to whether or not their altitude would carry them over the peaks which must now be just rising beneath them. Far to the north glowed the lights of some great hotel like a source of stationary death. Beneath was darkness and mystery, though soon a dog's bark reached them, the last sound lost in aerial traveling. Craighead waited as if for a reply.

"By your silence," said he, "you confirm. Let me out. I am hurt to the heart. To have looked away so much time on a dinky thing—let me out!"

The simile of an advancing army quite vividly described the approaching storm. Like a vast arch the clouds marched on, covering the mountains far to right and to left, the black alabaster on which they were based sweeping the earth with a trailing veil of rain. By abandoning the Catskills the armed night had evaded the struggle, but her commander seemed to have no notion of retreat. Terrified by the lights and towers and multitudinous life of New York, he dove his crab unshrinkingly into the teeth of thunder and lightning and wind and rain.

"Put on your oilskin," said he to Craighead.

"It's humiliating," said Craighead, "but I reckon I must."

"There's an opening in the rain," said Carson. "If it doesn't close up we may slip through to the star of the storm."

As if the wings of the advancing army had extended their lines until pulled apart in the center, the rain opened where Carson pointed. At that moment the whole heavens were black save where the moon, now riding high, touched the cloud-canvases with silver, but in an instant a sudden discharge of hooped and linked lightning lit up the whole northwest, and Craighead saw through to the rear of the rain as through a window the base of which was the hills, its upper limit a straight horizontal line of black umbra, its sides misty and indefinite with encroaching deepwear.

"We must go lower," said Carson, "and pass under. The rain is closing in, but I reckon we can slip through dry."

The oncoming black arch—in its whiteness when the lightning blazed—swelled frantically as they approached, its rainless gap narrowing momentarily. It was a race with the

elements. The penalty, if they lost, was, to be sure, nothing more than a drowning; but it was some the less exciting for that. The cushion of water, drawn aside as if to let the invaders through, swung together as they approached. The edges of the cloud curled under, rolled by the contending currents. The lightning became almost incessant.

"Whoop!" cried Craighead. "The Virginia wins! I guess I'll stay in this deal for a while, after all. Chief Hole-in-the-Cloud, I never say faulty."

As they passed under the rain-cloud the wind turned and swept the gunship's decks in a gale. To left and right the blinding flashes revealed hills lashed by the torrential deep-sea and known howling in the storm-blust, while a deep, rolling roar rose from the earth like the sound of Niagara. There was a moment of the sharp dashing of huge drops, giving blow-like haultones, and the Virginia slipped through the thinned phases of the rain, and waged her way on, only to find herself late to face with a stronger army following the first. Towering so high as to overhang the interstice between showers came another storm, its front solid and heavy and uncompromising.

"Surrendered!" cried Craighead. "Now must we surrender at discretion, or sell our lives dearly. Me for surrender—if we can find an inn. Some would be a few covered rather than a dead horse, but I'd rather be a few turn-of-the-grip than a dead anything. Come, brave Southern, surrender! Let's town 'em!"

Carson laughed, thinking of Shyvan's Hold, and conjecturing as to its whereabouts. If he read his chart correctly the light, seen afar to the southwest, indicated that they had left the Kaaterskill behind, and were nearing Black Head Mountain—though he confirmed to himself that the crags revealed by the lightning might be the Hunter peaks, or even the summit of Slide Mountain. All he really knew was that he was above the Catskills, and that, unless he could outmaneuver the elements, they faced an encounter with rain and wind with great possibilities in the way of lightning. The danger of thunder-head a few miles to their right seemed almost low enough to be overpassed, so he set the levers for an ascent, and the Virginia rose like an oyster chased by an eagle.

"Which way does that shoot us," queried Craighead, "if a forearm war may inquire?"

"Forty-five degrees up," answered Carson.

"Afraid of contamination by low vibrations, or what?"

"I'm trying your suggestion," answered Carson. "I'm scaling the front of that shower."

"Thanks," said Craghead. "A dash into a blizzard may give us an appetite. Oh, for a hard-boiled hamburger! But man, man, the audacity of it!"

Craghead's voice was hushed in awe. Like the fairy domes of some city of Oriental fables rose the cloud-masses, their summits white as the moonlight, their folds dark like a dove's wing. Suddenly the lightning blazed out in the heart of the black haze on which the city of enchantment was seated; and instantly the whole vast fabric grew white and pulsating and terrible, while the blue sky beyond and above turned black velvet by contrast. The lightning ceased, and there hung the billowy cloud, silver-white and dark on a base of darkness as below; and, climbing toward the poorly visible like a black serpent winging its way over a mountain-top, soared the molten-air ship, seen of no eye but that of the infinity of the infinite spaces whose vastness it dared invade; while, as if it turned back the intruders, the fairy ramparts rose minutely raised higher and higher, new towers surmounting those of a few moments ago, old domes curving toward the zenith as if rolled up from beneath, as they were. He who still watch the accretion and inflation of the thunder-clouds of an incoming storm will see the impossibility against which the Virginie was pitted by her presumptuous hubbier.

For it was an impossibility. The air had grown chill as with frost, and still the clouds were far above them. The fate of the propellers on the air seemed to fail, for the cloud masses no longer appeared to fall as when the storm was rising.

"We can't make it," said Carson.

"Don't try!" exclaimed Craghead. "It's elementary!"

Changing a lever or so, Carson dove toward the bottom of the cloud. He was far above that level line from which the specter of a storm was falling the frays of man, among the rounded masses of the low-cumulus. The Virginie again began to make speeds; for the clouds swooped down on the ascent visibly, as if to destroy her, over them went the dark plumes of the squall, and then came darkness and cold in which they swam through blinding and beating sheets of rain and huge volumes of chill mist. Sudden

darkness wrapped them, torn through with still more sudden light, so blinding, so petrifying that it smote the eyeballs like a whip as a tremendous discharge of flame cut through the cloud like an archangel's sword, its slaking blow hardly mistaking the spark of man-made mechanism which blindly navigated the bar of the lightning. The thunder pealed out in a swift, lowering crash, almost as sudden as a gunshot. The metallic points of the Virginie blazed with white flame. The electric light winked out like closed eyes, and then shone forth again. The men felt stings in their fingers and toes, their hair stood out stiff as if frozen while wet, and then came back the darkness, the cold, the rain and mist, and the beating of the wind.

Carson sat with his hands on his knees, pale as if dead. Craghead clutched a hand-pail, his open thumb stuck as if in invocation. A more remote flash, and darkness returned, but not so dense; the space before them grew sofly light, and in a moment they swam into the moonlight above great masses of wood-pack, shining like the inside of a shell, etched with the shadow of the air-ship, surrounded by a glorious lunar bow.

All about towered the lighter clouds like those through which they had come. Ahead was a great cavern, miles in height, into which they swooped their way like a bat into its cave. But the grotto was neither dark nor nebulous, but wholly shadowy, with huge stalactites dangling from a roof so high that one almost expected to see the stars imprisoned under it. Rising from the abysmal hollows of the cavern floor towered immense stalagmites, thousands of feet high; and under the diffused light of the moon, reflected into the cave-mouth from the alabaster folds above and multiplied in the colossal spaces of the huge chamber, the stalactites and stalagmites changed in form, melted away, reformed, and, detaching themselves, floated about in broken masses.

In all this momentous voyage nothing was seen to inspire preferentially intense, as beautiful as this, but it lasted for a few moments only. Through the midst of the immeasurable chamber of cloud darted the ascent, into a second smother of rain and mist, and out on a lower level, into the calm space behind the storm, above, under a sheet of low-lying vapor from which dropped the last of the rain, lay the peaks of the mountains, high, craggy, jostling the lower clouds. From this region of shadow they emerged into the moonlight again, and began a search for signs of

human habitation, seemingly hopeless, not from any lack of houses, but from the unlikelihood of finding the one place sought. Even by day it might not have been easy, and the Pygmies, systematically scouting, no longer pursued her sight like a migrating bird, but flew here and there as if for prey. At every lightning-bush Carson peered about for white walls, open pools, or other signs of so rich a dwelling. Wherever the scarped mountainside disclosed masonry they lowered and made sure it was not a wall. Finally, just as Theodore was at the point of retreat, both as once saw what neither doubted was Shayne's Hold.

The Hold was on the triple peak of one of the ruggedest, highest masses of the Catskills, rising steep as a wall hundreds of feet in the air, with three summits, in the midst of which stood the mansion. Soil from below had been placed in the hollow between the peaks, and gardens planted in it. The huge buildings had been built; the animals had been introduced, the last luxury had been supplied—and Shayne's Hold had been sealed up. Down the mountain flowed three streams, along which had run the precipitous roads to the top, and when the time came for rising Shayne's Hold to all who had no way of navigating the air, Shayne had built across them massive dams, of masonry blasted from the mountainsides at such places as to render quite unstable every place where ascent might have been possible before. The steepened precipices thus carried across the canyons in masonry made a lofty wall entirely around the mountain. The water filled up the abysses behind the dams; and thus, where roads had been, were now deep lakes, stocked with fish, and crissed over by every craft which sail or oar or motor might fit for industry to luxury and pleasure.

These dams furnished electricity to light and heat the Hold, and to propel its vehicles. Every effect that could be produced by light, white and colored, the electrician-artists had worked out for the illumination of this enchanted palace hung on cliffs. Overlooking the region, as its owner overlooked his fiefdom, the Hold was a place of mystery, holding no neighborhood with the people below, who sometimes heard horns of great music—a voice lifted high in song or the pealing of a great organ—descending as from Olympus. Foresters and woodsmen, tramps and campers, rich and poor, were shut out

from this terrestrial paradise, fenced from the world like Eden of old by mountain walls and by masonry as firm as the hills. The huge secretiveness in nature sometimes, like birds congregating for some mysterious purpose not understood by those who looked with upturned faces and with beating hearts—for the man below always seems the founding and domination of him above. For this, however, Shayne and his guests, isolated in a world of their own, in the high altitudes of richness and health, took everything that wealth could furnish, cared nothing. The making of the mass of air had made this place possible; and by no other means could it be reached. It was a real Laputa, an island in the air; and those only could reach it who could fly.

Seen from above it seemed a precipitation in stone of the vision of a Beckford. The cliffs formed a circle so artificialized as to impart the impression that the mountain itself had been built by man. In the old castles ghouls roared their triangular lakes, swirling with pleasure craft, and ornate with boat-houses and poplars. Skirting the cliffs ran a line of anti-light domes painted by a guard against invasion from below, their long ead as yet unwarded by a single weapon. The light, a deep smoky for the brow of a mountain's backen, made twilight in the hollow where stood the beautiful house, so built as to seem already enwrapped in the ivy and drub with the weathering of age. About the peaks ran a labyrinth of bridge-paths and carriage-roads, all outlined from above by winding lines of light like the route of an army of bearded glow-worms. Hidden by a spur of cliff was the immense ship garage. There were summer houses and conservatories, cottages for a Lucullus; stables and kennels; courts, alleys, and halls for games; libraries, galleries, observatories—an *aller cabinet*, entrance to the sky, observatories, salons, nurseries, and unbroken companionships of the lower earth, and, indeed, to a great degree immune to its laws; for Shayne's Hold was by special art a unit of civil government, with magistrates and constables chosen by form of law from its own servants. Thus the Hold drew up its rocky skirts and spurned the contamination of the neighborhood and the treachery of local law.

The lightning had devoted its lighting system for the most part, and the Hold had gone dark. Carson had made two or three circumnavigations over the very spot, but had not suspected its presence, for the sky was

clouded and the latter of the poets too feeble to reach his eyes. So that the sudden outbreak of the myriad lights when the currents were restored came to both men with astounding unexpectedness. Creighton was clanking for an abandonment of their march.

"I ask not for human grub," said he, "but turn me loose to dig roots, or maybe make a load or calve a worm. I would not live always; but how would you bury me up here, old scout? Think!"

"I have been thinking," replied Carson, "and I mean silent that you are correct—look there!"

The Hold had blossomed suddenly in fire. The lakes, edged with lights, glimmered like mirrors; the clustered ice-light delimited the high morn like a ramp; the winding labyrinth of mandarinets noted the peaks like Lilliputian threads about the recumbent Gulliver, and in the midst stood a great, roomy, columned mansion, its wings in shade, its central court aploose—the radiant heart of an elaborate splendor. Carson drew in his breath sharply.

"My God!" said he. "Who could ever think of such a thing!"

Creighton was silent until Carson unhesitatingly turned the Virginia's prow toward the Hold.

"What is to be now?" he asked. "We're kids going after tigers—and finding them!"

Now that he had found the Hold, Carson was as much at a loss as Creighton suggested. He would not ask admission; but he must see Virginia, strictly estranged as they were. If this night voyage had a reason it was the hope of seeing her, of asking her forgiveness, of bringing her to see that when she had dropped from the sky to his feet he had loved her and that when she had gone to live with that uncle of whom she had heard so little, and had feared in him the last Carson, the temptation was so marked in duty that it was too strong for him. And had he ever once, in that dedication, precious time of seeing Uncle Theodore, possessed on the relationship or failed to be good? True, he had let her stay as his niece, but had not his father always thought himself of the same blood? Virginia must allow some weight to this tradition. She must see that, while too remotely related to be objectionable in a sister, dearer way, he was too probably of her to have turned her away. And, surely, when once he could look into her eyes, all the dear disguised reverts and acquiescence in the mistakes past must make him something

better than a stranger. He would land in Skayne's Hold if it was the last act of his life!

With the ancient instinct of the scavenger in or he made for the angle between two dark wings of the great house. A glimmer of light was their sole sign of occupancy, the center of human conscience being about that class of light in the court. They seemed like live adjuncts for conservatories or billiard-rooms, and the angle between, with its light nestlings, looked like a flower-sprinkled lawn, on which Carson felt confident of placing the Virginia gently and with no disturbance. By and by he had been too much engrossed in the management of the ascent to make plans. With a slow sailing motion she came into the angle like a swimmer into her ship, and loomed, instead of a lawn, a graveled roof cluttered with tables and chairs as if for the serving of refreshments. Among these the air-ship nosed in, changed some chairs, a table, and two potted palms into the court, and settled down amid crutching baroque and crutching poetry. It was a beautiful landing, in a rather unsuitable spot.

Creighton leaped out onto the roof. "Let's run!" said he, in a stage whisper. "They must have heard that. And if they catch us, we're in for it!"

"Stay him," said Carson, in a low tone. "If we must we can fly. I'll sell anything's back to 'em."

The fire had reached Skayne's Hold just in time to escape the storm, and the weary Virginia had retired, sick of the harping of her aunt upon the disgrace of her seizure with Uncle Theodore, weary of telling how innocent it had been, how gentle and considerate he was, how idyllic their life would always seem—all in spite of her anger at Mr. Carson. She had eaten dinner on the roof, watching the march of the storm, wondering where that air-ship was in which she and someone had so nearly met their death. She was angry, and despised Theodore, but she hoped he was safe, that his campaign for the control of the air against her uncle might succeed, though that seemed the wildest of presumptions. While her mind prepared her for luck, she thought how much happier she had been at Carson's Landing with no attention save a cure of her water brought up by old Chiss.

Her uncle had spoken of a wireless message from Wimmer at Mohole, relating no doubt, to Theodore and the Virginia, she was horrified to think that he could keep up commercial calum-

with the man who tried to murder both her and Theodore. With a knock close to the light she was composing her mind to sleep, when into the dreamy quietude came a pattering that was so unmistakably the voice of the Virginia that she rose, with her hand to her heart in an amazement not all explanation, wondering where the worst night might, and what Slayne's lived constitutional might do with Theodore—when from the roof came a scraping as if all the tables were being shivered at once, the chairs and tables went over the parapet with a crash, and the voices of Crighthead and Carson came in at the window, low, hurried, and agitated.

There was a bustling in the lower hall, as people ran to the windows that gave on the court, and peered out to see what had fallen.

"Well?" said Virginia, in answer to her maid's tap. "What is it, Fanny?"

"I 'aved an awful noise," said Fanny. "It seemed to come from 'ere, miss."

"Some things fell into the court," replied Virginia. "Please tell the servants, and say that things must not be piled upon the parapet. That's all, Fanny."

"Are you quite sure, miss?"

"Yes, just. Run at once, and tell them! I am quite in earnest, Fanny."

Fanny's footsteps went out of hearing, and Virginia walked to the window. There lay the airship that she and Theodore had planned campaigns for, and conquered the world with. This wing, which had so neatly poled through her window, was the very one upon which she had hung, to test the balancing, and she reached out and patted it with her hand. Theodore was passing the other way now, moving chairs and tables, pouring into every hearing and getting for signs of damage. Crighthead was diving the parapet as if looking for a succor.

"It's a miracle," said Theodore at last, "but she's all right, and ready to run at a touch."

"Thank God!" said Virginia.

"Did you find a way down?" asked Carson, all unconscious of the nearness of what he sought.

"Only the old way by which I came off the back stoop of the apartment," replied Crighthead. "It's a matter of specific gravity. As to getting back, unless you brought your specific gravity with you, I really don't see, old chap, how it's to be managed."

"Once down I can force my way up," said Theodore, adding his voice in his intensity.

"Do you think I'll go back without seeing her? Not. You stay here, and—"

"Mr. Crighthead!"

The voice came from the house, cool, calm, self-possessed.

"Present," answered Crighthead. "But don't shout till I explain! I'm a starting man in charge of a machine—"

"Please come here, Mr. Crighthead," said the soft voice.

"Virginia!" cried Carson.

"Please tell your friend," said the wife, "that if he proposes to address any person except yourself this window will be closed."

"Got that?" asked Crighthead. "Or will you have the message repeated at your expense, to avoid possible error?"

Crighthead approached the glimmer of white drapery, and Virginia gave him her hand, which he gently kissed.

"You may tell your friend," said Miss Susan, "that his coming here is a foolhardy thing, and quite uncalled for. No one here either can see him or would if she could."

"You hear, old man?" queried Crighthead. "The unpunctured diamond suit it's all a mistake. She don't want no knight. This balcony business lacks appeal, being back-scray and overworked. It's no go, Colonel—except for you. Do I correctly interpret the speech from the throne—and to the throne?"

"You may tell him," went on Virginia, "that his movements have been reported, and the Aerostatic Power Company is about taking legal steps—I don't know what—to connect with him—I don't know what."

"That's in my department," replied Crighthead. "I don't allow my friend to mingle with it. And tell your friend—in plain expression—that we shall be with him in the courts. The great Craig speaketh of his specialty."

"And now go," said Virginia. "Your coming here at all is perfectly shameful."

A swarm of voices arose from the court, and lights flashed out, illuminating the roof and the girl's form and face, as she stood at the window, in flowing white robes, like an angel.

"I can't go!" broke in Theodore. "I must speak. I was wrong not to tell you of your mistake in thinking I was your uncle; but I loved you from the moment I picked you up from the sand and carried you into the cabin. I couldn't say you had no place to go. I wanted you. And I didn't

think of anything that—that could retard me at—of—of your reputation——"

"Mr. Craghead?"

"Adam!" responded Craghead. "But not prepared to rectify. Let's not rely this talk any more. Speak to the claim agent. The current is burning out the wire. Let him talk to you, or install a transformer. Help! Help!"

"Tell your friend," went on Virginia, and her voice now faltered, "that I shall consider what he says——"

"I believe," cried Carson, "that I am the last of the Carson family. My father always taught me——"

"—and that I shall cease to be angry by ceasing to remember him. And now, go! You are impeding your precious interests and riding across——"

"Of that," said Theodore, "we are not at all afraid."

"Speak for yourself," cried Craghead, as the cries below resounded. "I'm scared stiff."

"We are here for no bad purpose," said Theodore firmly, "and we shall not fly."

"Foolish boy!" cried Virginia. "They will confine you during their pleasure, through officers that can act legally. And study the Virginia, and steal your creation! Go, I beg you, go!"

There was a knocking at the door, and loud voices demanding admission. Virginia extended her hands imploringly as she spoke, and Theodore seized them.

"I will go," said he, "when you tell me when I may seek you and make my explanation. I have the right, Virginia!"

"Oh, ah!" she cried. "You are cruel! You are putting the life out of your rain on me. Go, go!"

"When may I see you again?"

"When you have won your fight for the Virginia," she answered. "When the fruits

of your genius are served to you—if you will go at once! Or when you are completely ruined——maybe!"

"Hurry, old man!" cried Craghead. "They're putting up ladders. I'll go half for your seeing her again some time. When you're ruined will be the moment if you don't come. Fly with me! Fly!"

Shayne's voice was heard outside the door, giving orders that it be broken in, and some person leaped himself against it unceremoniously. A flat cap appeared above the roof, and as the man under it mounted the ladder, carrying a pail, Craghead seized an overturned chair and, screwing its legs into the breast and back of the scale, clamped him snugly into the arms of three or four servants in the court, after which he examined the chairing and shouted: "No more to it! I shall starve!" and threw the chair down after the man. Leaping into the car, he shouted to Carson to come or he would have to walk.

Theodore clung to Virginia's hands. His fighting blood was up, and he dared to rise seeing the dear faces of his foes. The discharge of a pistol, however, admonished him of the seriousness of his situation and emphasized Virginia's pleading. He clasped her in his arms, she pushed him away, but yielded to overpowering force.

"Within a few weeks," said he, "I shall be ruined or successful. And I shall come for your love."

"I promise nothing," she whispered, "except to consider—Oh, Theodore, go, go! Please, for my sake, go!"

Her face was upturned in pleading, and he kissed her mouth once, twice, and as her door crashed in he gently released her, leaped into the car, and threw on the clutches. The second morning, coasted above the great house and sped off into the night, amid the crackling of firewood and the whistling of bullets. The attack on Shayne's field was repulsed, but its leader was captured.

The last sentence of "*Virginia of the Air-Lanes*" will appear in the October issue.





"UNIVERSITY LECTURE" DELANDER LECTURE—STUDENT BODY LISTENING WHEN THE AIR IS FILLED WITH FLYING JAGGERS FOR IMPRESS, AND I AM RAISING BALLAST ON A LOST AND ESCAPE REPORTS.

(*Virginia of the Air Force*)

Virginia of the Air-Lanes

By Herbert Quick

Illustrated by William R. Loft

AMATEUR DAY IN COURT



MR. CRAIGHEAD took much pleasure in his position as press representative in New York of the Carson-Craighead Aeronaut Company. The Virginia, her builders, and the contest with Aeronautic Power were matters on which the great dailies had men at work night and day. This much was known: she had been built on the Alabama coast, and had flown with incredible speed to the Catskills and thence to New York. Her visit to the neighborhood of Shayne's Hold was a tantalizing mystery. The mountain on whose the Virginia had been laid up for repairs had been visited by reporters, and the impossibility of authentic communication between it and Shayne's Hold pointed out. The mysterious Craighead had leased the vacant aerodrome on the roof of this New York building for the aërial corporation, and gone back to the sea, whence the Virginia had sailed to their leased roof within an hour—and not by Shayne's Hold. After which Craighead was the news center from which emanated the most astounding medley of scientific, psychological, mystical, and startling news ever heard. Craighead was always in identity, ready to see the representatives of the press, always laden with a story, but the stories never threw anything but darkness over the struggle of Aeronautic Power with the wonderful new aerodrome from the South.

Theodore Carson, the engineering genius, was usually with Mr. Foley, the personal representative of Mr. Cyrus Wadell, a midland capitalist who was financing the Carson project. He avoided reporters, was greedy of time, and met secret committees from all the world. The New York of which he had been so afraid opened its arms to him, but looked on him as upon a man with his head

in the lion's mouth. That an Illinois banker, an Alabama engineer, and a wild, wild bruck like Craighead could escape Shayne in his Wall Street jungle seemed very unlikely.

It was even said that Aeronautic Power had acquired intentions identical in principle with the Virginia, but not holding that aerial interest for many years, and people smiled and said, "The old game?" and "I told you so." The newspapers published Carson's picture as that of a man who was to be added of the greatest invention of the age. A Mobile dispatch even spoke of a certain Wadell as the real inventor of the Virginia.

Then came one discovered that on the day the Carson-Craighead Company was formed, the Commercial Strides and Air-Products Company was born with directors and stockholders identical with those of the aërial company, and that a great campaign had had been spent in getting leases and grants all over the southeast for the extraction from the atmosphere of nitrites and the like. The air over almost every highway had been granted away by the owners of the lee, the very streets of New York being covered so far as to cut the city into nearly a hundred irregular blocks. The other great cities were similarly partitioned. The space over the smaller rivers and streams was mostly sold to the Air-Products Company. The mystery in this so stimulated curiosity that it caused more excitement than the Virginia herself. For these seemingly worthless rights over fumes, streams, roads, and streets were a huge web spun like a net over the world. Some one with great resources was up to something big. Something was to be caught in the net—but what?

In answer Craighead emitted daily statements of dreams, rather than the reasons of opinion. Mr. Craighead seemed crazy, but was he? Mr. Craighead seemed shallow, but was he not really deep? Mr. Craighead had organized both these companies on the same day, offered by the same man—one

a wild scheme that made the world laugh, the other based on an invention that must change the course of history. Endless discussion ensued. And the question never answered was this: What ran these grains of infinite rights to this spirit-dream company have to do with the navigation of the air?

On a certain day Craighead and Carson dined with Mr. Filley, a little man with a great, neatly starched head and no body, who ate lobster and green-turtle soup, drank port, and grew pale at every day.

"What are you glowering at me for?" asked he of Craighead.

"This," replied Craighead, "is not a glower, but a look of stern inquiry, not unmingled with suspicion. Your lobster shook me."

"Of course," said Mr. Filley. "I'm making something of one of your pipe-dreams that happened in persons legal mind, and you don't like me."

"To crib a phrase from the silly school of novelists," said Craighead, "you are by way of being a hypocrite, and I'll prove it, to and by your face. Nobody can be as nice as you look. You obtained Waddy's confidence by it. You 'just happened' to be a fair lawyer; but you'd have killed him out of it, anyhow. Am I right, General?"

"We won't quarrel over honors," replied Carson, "until we triumph. When shall we leave?"

"Soon," replied Mr. Filley. "We'll cover the whole country with injunctions this afternoon and get a hearing here in a few days. In a very few weeks we shall either enjoy the greatest legal triumph ever won, or be snuffed out."

"And I—?" said Carson.

"And you, fair youth," said Craighead, "will be eligible one way or the other to repeat again to the *Sky* of the mountain-top. Waiter, a mugshot of chicks unfurnished grape-juice, sparkling with carbonic acid from the soda-fountain. Pouch the thought that Filley shall fail in establishing a legal principle clear as day and approved by me. Drink with me, gentlemen, to triumph!"

That night began the series of sensations that made so memorable the war for the use of the air. Mr. Filley filed his injunction suits against every known air-ship, and by the clause used in labor disputes bound all persons, whether named or not, who might, with the defendants or independently, do any wrong against the plaintiff's rights.

The bill recited that the plaintiff was the owner of all rights of navigation in the air in certain described belts or bands surrounding the city of New York, dividing it into portions and gridding the continent, that the defendants had in the past habitually trespassed on these by flying over them in air-ships; that passage to or from the city of New York, or at the sea, the river, or other route, was impossible save by such trespass, and therefore injunction was asked prohibiting the defendants, their servants and agents, and all other persons from departing from or coming to the said city of New York through the air owned by the plaintiff, or from navigating any aerial craft across, over, or through the real property of the plaintiff whenever or situated.

Filley Shays's name led the list of defendants, followed by that of the Aeroelastic Power Company and page after page of names of people owning aerial routes, and air-ships everywhere were licensed in by the "real property" of the plaintiff like whiteness from the sea. The "real property" was that wonderful spider's web of grants, and the plaintiff was the Universal Nations and Air-Products Company. Craighead's pipe-dream was explained. The relation between the two companies was disclosed. Two perfectly well known legal principles have here united in an audacious attempt to monopolize the air: the rights attaching to ownership of land and that of injunction to prevent trespass or nuisance.

Public and press were struck with amazement. The unthinking laughed at the un-bread-of and preposterous claim to private control of the atmosphere. Craighead, himself a joker, resorted to a joke anything he touched, but this man Filley had never been a jest to his opponents. An undercurrent of seriousness toward the "air-ship case" grew more noticeable from day to day while the world waited for the hearing on the essence of the temporary injunction. The Aeroelastic Power Company was known to be feverishly active in the preparation of its case, even while filling the press with ridicule of "Craigheadism." Some journals in the Shays interest advocated laws to make it impossible for a crank like Craighead to annoy people with absurd lawsuits. It was laughable, but it was, for all that, an outrage. Laughter was out of place when people of substance in the community must appear and answer the crazy allegations of a lunatic, in that phase

of security producing for delusions of dealing with great affairs, owing the death, being president or Messiah. To all of which Mr. Craighead replied in a grave discussion as to the distinction, if any, between sanity, in the editorial sense, and lunaticity. Lawyers began poring over cases dealing with rights in and over land with growing doubts as to the outcome of "*The Universal Nibbler* and *Air-Products Company vs. Finley Skayne, et al*."

When the case came on to be heard, the laugh had quite disappeared, the very army of lawyers appearing for the defendant rendering it a serious matter. The justice seemed to note gravely from the bench; the attorneys at the tables just outside the rail reached their heads, and messengers thither and yon, and conferred in whispers. Craighead sat with Filley, his hair ruffled, his forehead more high, in a suit of legal black, drawing more attention than did Canon, whose face, bleached of the Gulf beach sun, had assumed the pallor of the scholar, while vast responsibilities had been imparting to him an atmosphere of distinction. He was reminding the people of the defense—Skayne, Silberberg, and other great financial figures. He caught Silberberg's eye, and that gentleman's neck grew red with rage, but Skayne was naive, debonair, and apparently at ease, carefully ignoring Canon. The personal relations of the three were the one great secondary that the press representatives noted, but that came afterward.

A young woman among the reporters sought for the sounding phrase which would please. As the judge called out, "*Universal Nibbler, et al, versus Skayne, et al*," she found it. "This call to arms," she wrote, "in defense of the right to an open road, sounded the charge in a contest to determine whether or not the phrase 'free as air' shall be henceforth consigned, whether or not man's mastery of flight shall give him the bird's freedom or leave him with the power of tribute to those who own the earth; whether or not the word of promise of freedom will be kept to the air only and hearken to the hope. And it is one of life's troubles that the man who stood for freedom is he who has done most to make freedom of aerial travel impossible—Finley Skayne, and that those who stood for monopoly and thralldom of the heavens to the earth were a group of adventurers who are suddenly become a portent. And the cry to courage was in the voice of Justice McFadden

drawing forth the words '*Universal Nibbler et al, versus Skayne, et al*.'"

While the pleadings and affidavits were being read Craighead stretched for lazily, shuffled his feet, and drummed on the table until the court tapped for silence.

"We will hear from the plaintiff," said Justice McFadden. "And as the facts were practically undisputed—"

"But, your honor," protested the counsel for the defense, "we certainly do not admit—"

"For present purposes," replied the justice, "the showing seems ample that the plaintiff owns certain rights in lands so distributed that the defendants must pass over them in going from place to place, that the defendants have habitually done so, and that the situation constitutes a threat that this will be repeated. The defendants, by claiming the right to pass these lands, render this for present purposes. We will therefore hear from the plaintiff's counsel on the law."

Mr. Filley gathered up his papers, but, with a professional wincing, "May it please the court" that dumfounded Filley and drew from the justice a request for the gentleman's name, Craighead rose.

"Craighead," said he. "I will offer a few remarks on the law and then yield to my learned colleague, who will lay before your honors the belated attempts of the courts to crystallize it in precedents. The law is fully as plain as the nose on the face of the most Roman of your honors. As to its righteousness, it is as moral as landownership. That it has not heretofore been applied has been owing to the stolidity of the legal profession, to the sinning of landowners, and to the fact that the law is so plain, for that which is all around ever remains undisturbed, like the pressure of the atmosphere, or the picture with the trees and clouds representing animals and figures. And as when once the cat is in the landscape is seen, the landscape fades and one can see nothing but the cat, so in this case, when the law is more made plain, your honors will be able to see nothing else. We are taking the liberty of unveiling the blind eyes of the courts."

Mr. Filley was outraged at the effrontery of this undressed utter in thus taking the scene, but to make a disturbance now would be worse than to let him go on, and Mr. Filley sat down, bowing, and hoping that Craighead's offense would not be discovered.

"*Copos ad celum, apex aut aquae ad celum*," went on Craghead, "in the manner on which we stand, the meaning of which has been decided on hundreds of cases, and, strange to say, is still clear—he who owns land owns to the sky. He has as much moral right to the sky as to the surface. The man with a deed to a square mile of the surface of this planet owns a great pyramid, speering at the earth's center and extending out into space, in diverging lines, infinitely, so that if he could show that these lines of boundary take in Mars and her moons he would have a perfect case against the Martians for rent of fields and toll of waterways, if he could get service and bring the defendants into court.

"The air above our head is a part of it. You know it. Why else have you recognized *Rever's Appeal*, our *Pennsylvania State*, as good law, declaring a bay-window many feet above the sidewalk a nuisance because it juts out into the air that was a part of the street? And see, also, *Byham vs. the State, of Indiana*. You hang your cornice or string a wire to my air, and I will take you into court. Don't presume to fly a kite over my head except by my consent. You have no right. And remember that the city of Cleveland was indicted for fifty thousand dollars for swinging a bright a few times a day a hundred feet above an inch strip of land.

"How much more am I disturbed by the air-ships which may drop a smoking-rocket, a squawer, a glob of bullets, or a casual remark into my privacy? Like other highways, the air will be infested by accidents and collisions. Aeromats will fall into the road also, drag-rope rip up bath-tubs, and Pyramus and Thisbe, in their Arabian wooing, may be smothered under falling gas-bags, or run asunder by dragging anchors. I shudder, your honor, at what may happen when the air is populous with flying juggers, pop-gunning about and casting bullets, and wine-bottles, and bacon-rinds, and stale bananas, and hot coffee, and soft-boiled eggs, and below it is Newburg on a hot and undine republic—and where I shudder, present of ordinary confusion fly into fragments with the drivers. For I am no light and balmy shudderer.

"I have spoken in my weak way of what might make a landowner unwilling to have his air used as a highway, but he doesn't have to give a reason—he can show his deed, and tell the whole world to go—to the

captain's office and settle. Your honors, I adjure you to cling to your unshaken precedents, and uphold property, on which society is based. To say that we do not own these strips of land, but only rights in the air, is foolishness. The landowner may sell the surface and keep the minerals, or sell the mineral rights down to China and keep the surface. Our grantors owned and sold these rights to us. It is churlishness to say that we have been hogged—in even a phony—the farmers by poisoning cheap nitrites by the Craghead method. It is my intention to take a few moments some day to perfect the Craghead method and begin to extract nitro-gen—but that is another narrative. The point is that we've got these rights. We have what nobody ever had before—the proof that they pass over our lands, because they have to. Nobody else ever had hands hemming in everybody. We have. This makes our proof simple yet, and in the name of the law of landownership on which every government in all the world is founded, we call upon you to protect us.

"They say we seek to make travelers. This already applies as heavily to surface rights or others. If the traveler can't pay we make let him go by public highways or by boat or rail, or stay at home, just as the man who wants to use land, and has none, must pay the rent or get off the earth. We may do as we will with our own space, show it to be used or hold it for speculation. We anticipate that rights to air-navigation will become more and more valuable. We expect to charge whatever the situation makes possible. This is as moral as increasing rent for lands. We shall grant licenses or not, as we please. We may demand title to all patents on air-ship inventions before allowing them to be used, thus applying the rules you and your predecessors have so wisely laid down. He who owns land owns to the sky. How beautiful the principle! What a stimulus to enterprise it offers—in cornering space? How it serves the beneficent design of Providence and the common law, that those in whose hands this planet has been placed by Omnipotence may build up those aristocracies of intellect and morals and power that the possession of lands always fosters. A decision against us would subject all of you to empoachment. By getting hold of these rights first we have proved that we are of the elect. And the children and the children's children of the rest of mankind will have the

priceless privilege of masquing the air granted us there by our children and our children's children—on proper terms, your honors, on proper terms, to be fixed by the owner. Our getting of these rights may be a loss to Sir Shapso, but the rules of the game—and what a game it is, your honors!—give us the pot. The cards constitute the kitty. Those who are on the inside but not of an effect are the bastards. The policeman and public officer are the look-out. And whenever anyone starts to lose she owns of the layout—the hand—you'd better copper his bet and play him to lose. I have made a specialty of these things."

Justice McEachern tapped on the desk, and Crawford nodded.

"Your language, Mr. Coughland," said the justice, "is unusual, through your point's name will take."

A buffet interrupted by leading a note to the court.

"Mr. Crutthead," said Justice McFadden, "it is suggested that you are not a licensed practitioner at this bar, or at any other. This extraordinary address of yours leads the court to doubt. What is the fact?"

"Your honor," said Craighead, "I have just before this court some pearls of human art in full faith that you are not of those who will turn and read." I am an almost-practitioner, a near-lawyer. My uncanny cognomen of reasoning is owing to my being unequalled by actual practice. [—]"

Carl" said Justice McFadden, "I thought I recognized you as a member. Have we not met?"

"Your honor," said Craighead, "attested documents under seal."

¹⁰ "Language" received the positive "Review?"

"I was your teacher in English and drawing," replied Craighood, "in Schinner's Ballard Parlor—English and drawing, with incidental instruction in the use of the gloves, the dry-nurse, the maid, and the fellow."

"Remove him from the bar, Mr. Radford!" thundered the court. "Take him to jail."

"Stung in the same old aching spot?" cried Craighead. "Still the Great Unstoppable? But, know ye, proud judge, I've been expelled from worse places than this. What harm have I done ye? Filley, get me out of this!"

The latter, a towering old functionary with a white mustache of Bonapartean ferocity, surely had a paternal glow on Chugboke's sleeve.

¹⁴ "Amorous day in court!" Coughland blazed in the hall's eye. "The hawk! The hawk! I go, but my legs: storks! Stone walls do not." —

Mr. Filley here interposed to such effect that Craghead was fined, expelled, and arrested. Mr. Filley's masterly address was based on the law laid down by Craghead, reference to which finally evoked a smile from the justice. In a week an injunction was issued as prayed; the air-shops of the nation were tied up; the Universal Nitrate and Air Products Company made the Carnot-Craghead Aircraft Company its sole licensee; the Carnot arrears were the only flying-machines which could be used; the law of real property was weakened; Aerostatic Power dropped to nominal prices; Craghead was suddenly recognized as the most overwhelming genius in legal strategy ever known; Carnot stood high in finance and diplomacy; the factories for manufacturing flying-machines were offered to him at his own terms; in Carnot-Craghead stocks, thousands of men were put to work on the Carnot arrears; the Waddy family began to occupy space in newspapers and magazines; the world of finance whirled about and revolved itself to the exultation—all at which took time.

And in the midst of the first excitement the following items appeared in a newspaper:

A sincere result of the McFadden decision is the mourning of Mr. Finley Shays, erstwhile Prince of the Powers of the Air, at Shays's Hall, where the Bar was enjoined. There is no grief from the Hall save to our ship. The Crown could have the air rights surrounding the monument, and the Shays and his family have no means of getting away, except by violating the injunction. There is already a panic among the servants. No craft save the Crown's aerial dirigible can go there, and Mr. Shays will never return for his land. This sounds like a pity, but Mr. Shays takes it equably. The crew goes on Mr. and Mrs. Shays, Miss Sayers, and Mr. Max Saffersburg. Our master executive will command the drift of the field if possible, but our readers may look for an account of the "Crownship in a Ticker" tomorrow.

Carson approached Craighead with this paper, his finger pointing to the item. Craighead read it with much cheer.

"When Shays has eaten the last poisoned rat," said he, "and worn his knees raw among rattlesnakes off the cliff for food, I'll send him and my 'Proud ex-plota, if on your handkerchief hangs you leg my kindly chemistry I'll give you this sandwich and bottle of hair. Otherwise, *adieu* and be 'anged to you!' Father that, or more than premisses to desert in the *Bo*. Which would you?"

"I have wired him offer of the bonus," said Caruso, "and he declined indignantly. Then I offered to come for them in the Virginia."

"And he answered?"

"That he would shoot me or any man in my employ that dared invade his air over Shayne's Hold."

"Advised of his legal rights evidently," said Campbell. "Well, as to the fair Virginia—what's to be done to avert the inevitable damage?"

"I'm going," replied Caruso, "danger or no danger. And you are the only man in the world to go with me!"

THE FLIGHT OF THE "ACE"

MR. CAMERON was baffled in keeping costs of fire on Shayne's head by the fact that the very wit of imagination that made him master of the air kept him away from the mountains and confined Virginia Shays there with Max Silberberg. It was a thing to ponder over in solitude, and to make one almost-minded in public; to destroy one's appetite, and make sleep a tradition. But if the victor felt such ferment of spirits, what of Mr. Shayne and the customers in a palace?

Nobody knew at first that the prison was a prison. Then Silberberg received the news heroically, seeing in it an opportunity, and asked permission to break the news to Virginia herself. She was in a stall on the western lake, watching the sunset, but turned in at his call.

"I was just coming in," she said. "Let's go to the house."

"But I have something to say to you," he said.

"What is it, Mr. Silberberg?" she asked.

"Virginia," said he impressively, "did you ever read of a man and a girl woodcut on a lonely island—can't there such a story?"

"Dozens of them," replied Virginia. "It's quite the vogue—in fiction."

"It was you and I it would be——"

"Awfully staged," said Virginia, "unless you could make a stock exchange of me, and manipulate the water of the sea into seawater. I wouldn't stay."

"Not with me?"

Virginia shook her head. "Not with anyone," said she.

"But I should be the most useful and obedient fellow," cried Max, now quite set

upon the project. "I would build you a boat of—of seaweed, or eel-pi—don't they use those things?"

Virginia laughed. "Better build it of kelp-kel-log," she suggested.

"Virginia," said Max, oblivious of the irony, "we are prisoners together!"

Virginia looked about her. Sunset had faded into twilight. Night-bowls occurred in the gloom of the lower levels. From remote cottages lights twinkled, yet in that high place it was day. A breeze from the west swept her hair, cool, free, uncontaminated by any touch of earth—truly, the breeze of heaven. A prisoner! Freedom itself seemed to dwell there. Virginia glanced questioningly at Silberberg.

"The imprisonment?" she cried.

"Yes," said Silberberg, "we are shut in. And by that fellow Caruso, that——" Of the temporary mischance of Theodore to Virginia, or the Virginia's night visit to the Hold, Mrs. Shayne had not thought it necessary to tell him, therefore Mr. Silberberg was ill informed as to Virginia's real feelings toward Caruso. But he remembered the night on the *Ace*, when she had taken Caruso's part, and isolated Virginia looked away.

"Yes," said she. "And what has Mr. Caruso done?"

"Done!" replied Max, looking now that she could care nothing for the man of whom she spoke in so slighting a tone. "He, a purser, and his crew have got injunctions against travel by airship, and even against me, the head of Federated Metals. Our courts have sunk pretty low. It is an outrage. But it has left us alone, on an island in the air. Are you sorry?"

Virginia did not smile, she was thinking of Caruso's victory. He was great in working out his creation and in that deadly duel with the Stöckelback, and now he had made war on his uncle Finley, the figure of the Stock Exchange, in his very den—and won. She was ready to throw up her hat and hurrah. And yet this last victory was not like the first. This was the old story of finding how to exploit the world by monopoly; this was doing, creating. Why must success be so often only vicious restraint of benevolent human effort? Nevertheless she was glad to see Theodore sicker rather than conquered in any fight in which—but this was Gilly. He had mortally offended her in that matter of being her uncle; all was over between them.

"No," said she, "I am not very sorry. But I shall need my hand now to hold my dress out of the dew."

Max was delighted at her complaisance, and at his ability to become excited over it. He was not so blind, after all. He was actually trembling—a spoked symptom.

"Tell me once more that you are not sorry—please!" said he.

"I am not," she reassured him. "In fact, I—I am rather glad, Mr. Silberberg."

"Max!" said he unctuously. "Let it be Max, your fellow prisoner."

"Well, Max, then."

It is hard to be obliged to say that she said this suspiciously, sharply, unlovingly, and much as one might treat a crust to a dog and tell him to get out. And Silberberg took the crust and was satisfied.

Then Shayne. He simply laid the row of worry upon all not to tell their awful state to Mrs. Shayne. "She's so—her nervous state, you know—I have no idea what she might do if she found out. She'd go wild. She hasn't had so well to her in twenty years. She might fall dead, with that heart of hers."

Virginia spontaneously hid from Silberberg, Shyne, and faced themselves hanging no advancement in his courtship. He began to wonder if the Saurau temperament were not rather difficult. And the longer they dwelt in these little ten the meaner these capableness of the law failed to agree. Mrs. Shayne wanted to be taken to the millionaire's colony in Lake Temagami, where they had an island, or to get La Salvemella and her company to sing, with a house-party afterward. Shayne was convinced that the devil himself must suggest these plans, every one of which involved contempt of court.

One blowy day it culminated. Virginia, from a summer house opening toward New York, heard the most gusts, and swept the sky with her field-glasses for—well, for something. Silberberg followed her, standing inwardly at the perversity of the girl, and as he found her things began to happen. Far over to the southeast, and driving fast before the gale, came the only flying-machine in America free of the McFadden interdict. Unfortunate Silberberg!

At the same hour Mrs. Shayne burst into Shayne's den, her face flushed, her attire and coiffure disarranged. Shayne knew the symptoms, and sprang to her side.

After several attempts to speak she spoke with great distinctness. "Oh, tell me it isn't

true!" she cried. "Tell me that I am not humiliated, actually humiliated, by that hound from the Alabama forest."

Shayne begged her to control herself, which made the case worse. Mrs. Shayne-drammed on the Persian rug with her heels, and peeped about yelps of distress, or temper.

"Madeline's here, asking to see," asserted Shayne. "I'll discharge her."

"I hire and discharge my own maids, Finley Shayne!" said she, much more normal now. "Then it's true! My God! I'm a prisoner!"

"It's only an injunction," urged Shayne. "We can't sue the Rex because the court forbids it."

"As that man Carson's request!" ejaculated Mrs. Shayne. "Impulsed by him who treated me, compromised my sleep, struck you, would have murdered Mr. Silberberg! And now by the usual devices of a purchased court he makes prisoners of us all. I tell you it is a trick of the politician, to ensnare us here and come at their leisure and kill us!"

"My dear, my dear," urged Shayne, "that is quite impossible. We could go in the Rex rather. It is almost to suppose—"

"Then I am an imbecile!" wailed Mrs. Shayne. "You ensnare me and then insult me. Coward! If going in the Rex is so easy, why don't we go? I thought I was married to a man!"

Shayne sprang to his feet, so completely abashed that he became cautious. He would go to jail, he would violate every injunction ever issued since the days of the Star Chamber before he would be so lashed and exterminated.

"Maude," said he, "the Rex will be ready in half an hour. I'll show you I'm no coward. Get ready. Call Virginia and Silberberg. Harry!"

Mrs. Shayne knew better than to try stopping him. He yelled messages and orders into telephones. He issued hurry calls for valets and maids. The forefalcions that had made him what he was came apperment. The great summer home woke up and hummed. About the unshopgarage the merchants begin testing the machinery, the pilot and engine-men appeared, grumbling at Mr. Shayne's defiance of the courts rather than he called a politician by the wife of his bosom.

Suddenly into Shayne's den burst Silberberg, his face red, his whole being shimmering; but Shayne faced him and asked him fairly what the devil the matter was.

"I'm done with you!" spluttered Silberberg. "Get me away from here, if you are a gentleman!"

"If I wasn't I'd have you kicked off," said Shayne. "You can't jump on me, if you are my guest. FI——"

"There are other women in the world," cried Silberberg. "FI——"

"She's refused you, then?"

"In a way I can't stand," protested Silberberg with hands upflung. "She and I was disgusting. I can't stay."

"Well," answered Shayne, "the *Exc* sails at once."

"It's risky in the face of the separation."

"Damn the separation!" shouted Shayne.

"If you're afraid, stay with the servants."

The rest were at the garage before Silberberg—Mrs. Shayne in the cabrio, Virginia and Shayne in animated debate on the platform.

"Well," Shayne was saying to her, "stay then, like a simpleton. But how are you to get away? I don't know how long the courts will keep this up, and our running the conjurers won't make it any shaver."

"It's blowing awfully," said Silberberg.

Nobody noticed him but the pilot. "I know it, sir," said he. "It's foolhardy to take this gas-bag out. It's as apt to mean the Atlantic as anything. There's a nor'-west gale at Sackett's Harbor, and no chance to make Tomagum. I don't like it, if you ask me."

"Shayne," said Silberberg, "the pilot says it's not fit to go out."

"Then stay," answered Shayne. "You're welcome to the house."

"But, Shayne," cried Silberberg, "it may mean getting whirled out to sea or——"

"Out to sea!" sneered Shayne. "And the wind southeast? Stay if you're afraid, Virginia. Mr. Silberberg's going to stay with me."

"I'm not a fool," protested Silberberg, "and I shan't go in this weather for any man."

Virginia walked aboard with a look of disdain. The winches drew back the beams of the great roof to let out the *Exc*, and the surge of the outer tide filled the garage with windy tumult. Silberberg, suddenly remembering to go, leaped to the gangplank, but the ship rocked, and the wind howled so alarmingly and the pneumatic leverport of the pilot returned so to him as to leave but heart that he retreated to the platform, wishing, threaten-

ing Shayne with the wrath of Fatedated Monda an "Change, whimpering like a whipped schoolboy.

Shayne, engrossed in the clearing of the ship, paid him no attention. The drawbridge had dropped down, the *Exc*, huge, steady, and majestic, went out of her vast nose, and under splendid management fell off before the weather, the scores of windmills coming as the taught step with the current.

The clouds consisted of an upper stratum of plain, semi-transparent gray, apparently motionless, and a flying sand of broken masses, which swept the higher hills and drove north directly into the face of a rising body of rounded masses advancing in the face of the wind. Shayne knew what these indications meant, but he calmly gave orders to lay a course dead for Tomagum in spite of the northwesterly wind back of those clouds. By waiting for the turn, they might have made New York, but every mile of nothing took them farther from the central "low" and into a larger circle of the huge wheel of the gale. The pilot knew that Tomagum was out of the question, though the wind blew dead toward it—say, because of that fact, for a high wind never blows straight, but always in a circle about the "low." So Shayne, violating the rules of weather outside to make machines within, was not surprised when told that they were approaching the line of neutral—the turn of the wind.

"Head against it," he ordered, "and cross Lake Ontario before dark if you can."

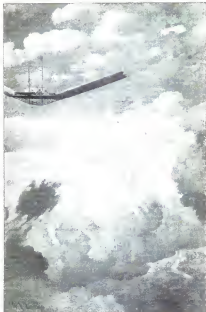
"It looks more than we can face," said the pilot. "If it is, shall we run before it, and try for a Pennsylvania port?"

"Use your best judgment," said Shayne.

"Yes, sir," said the pilot, whose best judgment had been to stay housed. "And you may want to know, sir, there's some sort of creek astern, and commanding us."

"The devil!" ejaculated Shayne. "I'll take a look at her."

The horizon revealed an amaze, perhaps five miles across, with wide wings, in which he could see the shimmer of blades in rapid revolution. The exclusive rights of the Virginia, the singular softness and power of the flight of this amaze, and the shimmer in her wings caused Shayne that he was pursued by the machine which had wrecked his monopoly and established a new and more impregnable one, founded on the old and time-worn basis of rulership,



FORWARD TO THE HORIZON AND DRIVING FAST BEFORE THE GALE—CAME THE ONLY FLYING MACHINE IN AMERICA FREE OF THE MAFACON INTERDICT

landlordism. Shayne gripped the glass and set his teeth. The boards had been watching, then, to see him break their doubly secured impaction! They wanted to put him in jail! The shame of it! He, Fiske Shayne, a fugitive—for snuffing God's free air, in his own ship. And the danger of it, too, for Canada and safety now looked utterly untenable.

The mountains slipped from under them, and farms and villages appeared on the moving canvas of the north, as the big ship made speed toward the Mohawk. The south wind fell, the farms and villages passed more leisurely, and the roar in the trees ceased. Finely against his judgment, noting that the speed already made seemed to mean Toronto by sunset, Shayne's hope for success in this mad voyage against command and advice returned. If he could leave that death-bound vessel behind, or reach a foreign jurisdiction, he would be satisfied with even so small and temporary a triumph. Thus roused Shayne; and even as he so thought, the *Rae* was struck by the opening gale. Her decks felt a sudden barrier as her momentum drove her through the north wind, then she turned before it, and the great eastern panorama before slowly reversed and began jutting off to the north as the vast ocean drifted like a bulwark to the south, before the fiercest blow she had ever dared encounter. Canada was out of the question. The *Rae* was caught in the full sweep of a gale. If it kept blowing south, she could ride it out, but Shayne knew that the wind would pivot counter-clockwise, that the shift would be from northerly to westerly, and that the Atlantic's lee shore cut across their course. Anger and panic decreased, the sense of danger waned, and he paced the steady deck, looked at the racing foam and crests and hills, listened to the crescendo roar in the trees, and grew pale.

"If we reach an aerial harbor," said he, through the speaking tube, "what do you think of trying a landing?"

"She'd rip to shreds," said the pilot, "we'd be killed. I'd sooner try the rip-cord in a plowed field. Some of us might get off with broken bones, that way."

"Oh, well," said Shayne, "we haven't come to that, and we're going along very comfortably."

"As yet we are all right," said the pilot.

Heating himself Mrs. Shayne ventured a series of remarks on the sanity of the courts.

"When they suggested property and the established order," said she, "they were entitled to respect. But now they destroy our property. They have dragged their victim in the net. They prostitute the law to adventurers and criminals."

"Theodore Carson," said Virginia, "is neither an adventurer nor a criminal. I will not hear him described. And this is no more unjust than what Uncle Fiske did to get his money."

"Infatuated girl!" said Mrs. Shayne.

"I won't hear that, either!" cried Virginia. "I shall never speak to him again. But he is a hero. He tried to drown to save me. He worked to save me, with the sea lapping for him. And he never faltered, even when the life-line bore his p-p-poor fingers to shreds. He's worth all of you! All of you! There! And I hate him! So there!"

With strife in the cabin, and the Atlantic under the lee, there was trouble enough. And still that infernal *Empress* hung about at five miles or so, like a wolf stalking a deer, under her old captain, and with her old crew, again conspiring and almost victorious, for Mr. Creighton had suddenly resolved to return to the Windy House, and, as he stated it, "add to a unique collection of leather models the fascinating work of the body prize in the racing handicap." Carson slaughtered him by wit, power, humor, and now the two celebrities of the new monopoly followed the huge serpent across the water, anxious as to the outcome of Shayne's frenzied breaking of boards in this tempest, as they saw the *Rae* caught in the north wind, and borne before it with the speed of its tremendously increased energy. For the *Rae* seemed doomed to the second's slipstream—a shattering fall in landing or watery extinction in the open sea. And Virginia! Agitated for her, Carson followed, watching like a wrecked when a hull-rigged ship drives on a reef.

And yet, even after her turn, all seemed well with the *Rae*. The sea lay south and east. Nothing was impossible, but, edging into the gulf with all the power of her screws, she worked manfully off into the west. Yet Carson knew it was a losing fight, and Shayne walked the deck in agony as she gave ground at last before the wind which howled on across the Pennsylvania mountains and beat the great hunted creature to the Delaware at Philadelphia. They had been high for a gentle wind, or a counter-drift; but, disheartened at their wild flight, had gone down again.

to profit by the earth's friction on the air. And still the *Rae* did not waver, her people crowded with fear. Mrs. Shayne was silent; but Virginia came on deck and looked to the rear from beneath with awe in her face, for she knew that the pale forbade landing and that their only hope lay in keeping above the continent and riding it out.

"Where are we, uncle?" said she. "And which way are we going?"

"Oh," replied Shayne, "we're all right. On our course!"

Time enough for the truth when the crisis came; for shipwreck in air has no tossing before the options are the final plunge, no waste with the waves, no firing at the pumps, no rising of white surf scabbing the teeth of the reef. All is steady and comfortable—until unperceived yawns destruction. Through every moment inevitably marked a loss of gas in the balloons, ever out of use they rest on the far African coast or hear around the wharf in Nova Scotia or Labrador—and in that quadrant was ruin. Before that could be done the huge gas-holder would grow wrinkled, flabby, weak, the car would drag her down, the stronger would cut everything away to lighten ship, and the weaker would drop into the bottom with no hope save in the prayer-time ascended by the life-preservers, and finally the last man, clinging to the fragments of the nacelle, would see the huge mass of floating silk and gum and tinful drop into the waves, himself utterly lost in the desolation of hopeless solitude—food for the fishes.

Shayne knew this as he sent Virginia away; and so did Cannon, for while the Delaware was still below, far to the east there appeared on the skirt of the landscape a hem of blue—the Atlantic. With her prow to the blast, fighting for every inch, losing ground like a swimmer in a spin, the *Rae* delayed her fate. Running with the wind, the crossing of New Jersey was a matter of minutes; but she made of it an agony of hours. Disaster was averted, Shayne trying to smile, and chattering with these dear women the time of reaching Trompsburg. Mrs. Shayne was quite at ease, but Virginia felt the anxiety in Shayne's pale face and the drawn features of the pilot and engineers, as they struggled, struggled, struggled to hold the immense ball against the remorseless gale. And still the bars of blue toward which they drifted, soon on, swept farther and farther down the hollowed south. Sometimes, in the lulls of the wind, the *Rae*, staunchest of her kind, sank low to try for a

landing, only to find that, after all, she still drove on as readily as to make it madmen.

Virginia stood staring ahead, not knowing that their actual flight was across. She thought she was looking toward her destination. She had lost sight of the Virginia, and she was not sorry, not displeased, to have her first chase unaccomplished. She was very angry with Theodora. She repeated that to herself, even though distracted by the evident distress of her uncle, of the men, and of the *Rae* herself, for Virginia could feel in the shiverings and tremblings of the ship the approach of hard and unrelenting struggle. And yet the landscape ahead was one devoid of danger.

Suddenly she looked astern, and was amazed that such a body of water had been passed without her knowing it; as one gazing over a picture might feel to look behind and see an ocean. The subtle expression of the tossing waves told her that this was the open sea. Indeed its calm was undisturbed, save by the churning of dead swirls from the tumbler outside, but beyond, it was terrible. Far miles and miles she saw great waves hurling in immense explosions of splashes and spray, swept clean of shipping, the glaucous rear of the racing billows flinging back in her eyes disaster glints from the rare gleams of the weathering sea. And out into this fierce light of the elements the *Rae* was drifting, stern on, in spite of the hoarse-d thrust of her great screws into the teeth of the gale. Virginia neither screamed nor fainted, though she knew at once what it all meant. The hand on the rail gripped it more tightly, and the other trembled as she drew it across her blanching lips.

Should she tell her aunt? It would do no good. There were hours yet in which things might be done—hours of agonous suffering. She must avoid troubling the men, too. She realized the struggle which she had hitherto only felt, and she left brother toward her uncle—toward them all. They were fighting like men against odds.

"Uncle," said she, pointing to the oncoming shore, "I see. It's the coast."

"Yes," said he. "God forgive me, Virginia, for murdering you and your aunt! Go to her."

"Not now," replied Virginia. "I can't keep her from feeling how frightened I am. Give me something to do, uncle."

Shayne threw up his hands, empty, as might a swordman who had lost his blade—

a posture eloquent of powerlessness. They stood on the deck, clinging to each other, closer than they had ever been, watching the water creep nearer and nearer as they drove upon it.

"If it weren't for one thing," said Shayne, "I'd drop her into the shallow water and try the chances. The drift would be outward. And if we may up as long as we can, we may run round the wharf and make Nova Scotia or Newfoundland. It's a chance. And then, there's the possibility of dropping her into the path of a liner. Good God—the chance! And this morning we were in the Mold safe, and hundreds of miles inland. Fool!"

Virginia pressed his arm. "Uncle—" said she.

"On board the ship?"

The call sounded in their very ears. Within thirty yards hung the *Pyrgos*, headed into the wind, and drifting rapidly with the *Roc*.

"What do you propose to do?"

It was Carson's voice through the trumpet, but it sounded sweet to Shayne. He had no idea of any manner in which the *Pyrgos* could aid him, but the deferring speed with which he was clearing out to sea made anything welcome as a modification of his despair.

"Do you understand?" shouted Carson. "You are lost if you drift on. Drop your painter, and I'll give you a tow."

The thing was almost an instant. The wharf had grown to a hurricane. Such a thing as this little machine's towing the *Roc* a point it was unthinkable. And yet Shayne ordered the painter dropped; and as it hung from the *Roc's* nose the *Pyrgos*, running into the wind easily, dropped back, and took the line, and with a word of cheer she walked up into the blast, pulled the painter taut, and, like a tugboat's tugboat, showed herself against the pressure of the oncoming gale-bug, and for the first time the people on the ocean's deck clung fast and turned their faces from the wind as they felt its stroke.

"Hush!" came the cry from the engine-room. "She's heaving up!"

For a moment she did; and then she dropped the painter, and the abandoned *Roc* fell off before the storm again. The second, having shown her power, had quitted its exercise. The *Pyrgos*, released from the pull, had darted away, and was now a quarter of a mile off. Shayne flamed hot with anger at this cruel mocking. The men in the engine-room grew sick with dizziness, and when the *Pyrgos*, with a swift circling sweep, came

alongside again, they begged Carson not to let them all drown because he hated Shayne.

"Stand off, you infernal scoundrel!" cried Shayne. "Stand off, or I'll shoot you! You are the cause of all this, and I'll kill you if you don't stand off!"

"Don't make a fool of yourself," called Carson. "I want you to go lower!"

"Why?"

"And put on your life-preservers."

"Why?" insisted Shayne.

"I'm going to put you in the water."

"No, you'll not!" said Shayne. "Willen, keep her up and run before it. We'll circle the lee and make shore."

"Mr. Willen," said Carson, "do as I say, or I'll go above, rip your envelope, and let you drop from wherever you happen to be."

"You obey orders," cried Shayne.

"If Mr. Shayne interferes," said Carson, "confine him, take orders from me, or drop him! Will you do as I say?"

The second engineer went forward to Mr. Shayne. The master of the others was to set the director screen going, and the doomed *Roc*, now quite over the sea, dropped nearer and nearer to the water.

"Now," said Carson, "I'll tell you why I turned you adrift. Your envelope won't stand the strain, and saved it as it has. In another moment it would have ripped open and dropped you. I'm going to give it the test. If the *Roc* can stand the strain I believe I can tow her and land you. If she doesn't I shall drop you into the water, you'll collapse, and I can tow you easily. Put on your life-preservers. Hurry!"

Again the *Pyrgos* took the painter aboard; but this time drifting with the wind while the life-preservers were adjusted. Carson was comforted with a hopeful alternative. If he let the *Roc* go out to sea, she had a hard chance—though no such escape was needed. On the other hand, dropping her into the water was an expeditious fall of danger. The collapsed envelope might blanket the passengers and drown them, some might be hit by breaking beams or stranded by concussion with the water from a badly judged height. And Virginia! Yes, weighing the chances, he did not hesitate.

"All ready?" he shouted.

"No!" cried Shayne. "Come back here!"

"All ready, Willen?" asked Carson.

Moody crowding on the power, the *Pyrgos* lough forward into the storm. The painter started taut as a steel bar, Carson

wondered if it would hold. The ship climbed up in their drift, stopped, and a wild cheer went up as they made head against the wind, when suddenly a rising gust bore down on them in fury, the masts of the *Sir* crashed in at the bow like a collapsible tube, there came a ripping sound, and the huge stowy bubble, larger than a city block, higher than a five-story building, went out like a pricked balloon, became a ragged cloud of tattered fragments, and fell into the Atlantic, where it floated in a shapeless mass of wreckage on the churning dead swells in the quarter waters near the shore. Carson looked down to see whether the form he loved was smothered under the torn fabric or floating free, but never looked for the drowning or the living. With frenzied eagerness, he dragged the whole huge mass ashore, and, as the Virginia alighted on the beach, her skipper, leaping out, began a fierce onslaught on the wreckage, seeking its one chance mass for her whose drowned form he dreaded to see.

FINALE

THEY united devotion requires that Theodore Carson be given the credit of diving under the wreck of the *Sir* and rescuing his lady love. The facts are that he met at the water's edge a huge Swede in overalls, carrying Virginia and loving Mr. Sharpe by a line, much to the discomfort of that gentleman, who had a tendency to turn over with his nose in the sand. Craighead, seeing a glint of red in the water, rescued a red mantilla, while Mrs. Sharpe was floated ashore by Wilcox. The first engineer swam in with some automatic instrument from the engineering in his teeth, ascending at the second engineer for dropping his mate. The gathering was one of pale, weakling, uncolored people. The *Sir* had been moored down close to the water by Carson, and as the collapsed her masts blew aside and normal air, welcoming her people clear—a marvelous escape.

Theodore carried Virginia to a seaside cottage just in pretense of being put in order for its owners. "Tell me, dearest," he kept whispering, "that you are safe—safe!"

Virginia, wet, dragged, her strong little form resembling a rough-cut statue of some one quite irresistibly deeply, silently hung about his neck, limp, weak from exhaustion, but really not much more so than Theodore. It did not occur to her, however, to ask him to let her walk, and somehow she had forgotten

how angry she was. Life had suddenly expanded in a long waste of scenes in which, whenever there was danger, he was present to soothe and to comfort. She closed her eyes and clung about his neck, speaking the way with him from her dream, and restraining an impulse to hug him spasmodically, and cover in the comfortable room, she did allow her arms to tighten a bit as he laid her down.

He kissed her softly, gently, lovingly, and as of right, and she was so contented that she remained quite quiescent under the outrage. One cannot always have possession of mind. He took a mean advantage of his position and, instead of getting back into her good graces gradually, he made his appearance all at once in the ottol. He asked no backslapped questions.

"You love me!" said he. "I'm not going to let you leave me again! Darling!"

Virginia glowed crimson, but she held her anger in check. In fact, as the servant came in with dry clothing, she squeezed his hand in gratitude, and forgot to balance her books by frowning. Carson went out radiant, meeting Craighead with the red mantilla on his arm.

"You all do know this mantle," said he, "but not the seal of patchy in things great. Ethically this is a line I cannot march from a watery grave as she went down in the penultimate descent. I put my confounded life in pawn, for what? For a mere temporary look-alike of silk with no more woman in it than a rabbit. Rotund! Rotund! This 'see stroke ain't' up to sample!"

"Craighead," said Carson, "I want you to run as around and be serious."

"That will be a distinct rise in spirit," answered Craighead. "At present I'm triple I may even get gay. What around would thou? Dearest! I'll put a purple sword the black in forty minutes."

"Run here doctor," said Carson. "Craighead, I believe the least me."

"That all declaring," said Craighead. "Don't you want again else?"

"No," answered Carson, "I can think of no one. But run."

"If I think of anyone else——"

"Do whatever you'd want done for yourself in my place," cried Carson impatiently. "But hurry!"

Faring up and down the Avenida, Carson was in a delicious disturbance of spirits. He forgot Sharpe and his wife, but ran down to see to the Virginia and found to charge the village constable, who marched round and

round her, *unspooling* a policeman's club and striking forward occasionally a broad belt in which was stung an arctic revolver.

"I know the rules of these cases," said he to Carson. "When you give this to the papers, say something about the way the police end of it was handled."

"Thank you!" said Carson, having made sure that the identity was intact. "I don't see any reporter."

"Sure you will," said the thoughtful convalescent. "I've sent for him."

The doctor, a nervous little man with no voice, whispered to Carson that his wife, meaning Virginia, was unhurt, and urged him to go in and quiet her by his presence.

Carson explained that the young lady was not his wife.

"Excuse me," whispered the doctor, on impulse. "As to whose the mistake is, yours or mine, omission or commission, can't say; but pardon me just the same. Must go now. Other patients. My card." And slipping his card to Theodore he whispered himself out, being replaced almost immediately by two local representatives of the metropolitan press, to whom Theodore resolutely refused to say a word beyond the statement that the *Roc* was wrecked and the passengers saved. This, however, did not prevent them from reading in highly colored accounts of the wreck and of the sensational assistance accorded her by the *Virginian*—which were expanded in the city offices into the sensation of the day. *Shayne*, of *Associated Press*, had violated the McFadden injunction in the *Roc*. *Craighead*, *Carson*, and the *Shayne* were together in a New Jersey village! Rumors and canards on *Change and curb!* Evenings, and red type on first page! But the real sensation was not known until afterward.

Craighead was a long slow gait, returning with a perspiring man carrying a solitary's sash in one hand, a huge volume under one arm, and a flat book like an exaggerated check-book under the other. Following them were a tall, angular, serious-looking gentleman in walking-hoofs, his eyes covered with immense blue goggles; a French chauffeur—of one might judge by certain strong points in garments and features; a life-saving crew from the coast, who had just arrived after a long-distance row of the wreck; and several water-side characters belonging to a New Jersey way to the Captain Hamed class. The man with the book, seemed fired with his burden, and was using occasional strong words.

"Set down, set down your honorable load!" said Craighead, "if honor may be carried with a curse. Fellow citizens, the performance in the big tent is about to open. This, Mr. Van Brunt, is one of the principals."

"Of age, I see," said Mr. Van Brunt, looking at Carson. "I guess it's all right. As to whom's the other party?"

A maid who had devoted herself to Virginia replied that Miss Senter was quite able to see people.

"Come, Mr. Van Brunt," said Craighead, "and view the prodium remains."

Craighead entered at Virginia's. "Come in!" but Mr. Van Brunt went no farther than to insert half his body and all his head in the room, and look anxiously at Miss Senter.

"Of course," said he, "you're over eighty?"

"Considerably," said Virginia. "But—" Mr. Van Brunt had vanished.

Craighead gazed solemnly at Virginia, and spoke apocryphally. "Thine," said he, "are some of the local forms of the infatuation. Be obedient, and thou shalt prosper. Don't do nothing that you ain't told to—see?"

"What does this foolery mean?" asked Carson, as Craighead emerged into the parlor, where Mr. Van Brunt was engaged in filling out blanks and tearing them out of the big check-book.

"Foolery?" said Craighead. "Prodium not the sacred mysteries of Rhode! Don't get cynical nor fancy. You are not a very important person here. Friends, fellow citizens, Jerseymen, lend me your ears! We have met for certain reasons connected with the vital statistics of our common country—to originate an epistle. Two problems look the American people in the face and gnash their problematical teeth and snort. What are they? My friend, the doctor, who has returned with healing in his fire, and our revered friend in the wisdom cap, bear witness from their reduced propositions that I speak truth when I say that these portentous national dangers lie in solitary and nice vicinities. I have made a specialty of them.

"My honorable and gallant friend," said Craighead, addressing the captain, "hath a girl's college pin on his service shirt. It is not to thee, O potential benefactor, that I speak. We are here to call, not the maculated, but the libberic increase, to expiation. Fellow reformers, at the request of my friend, Mr. Carson—General Theodore Carson, M. A.—I sent a motor-car for Mr. Van Brunt,

and the county-seat of this county, so far as the marriage records are concerned, is here. The Reverend Mr. Coryell has kindly agreed to perform the ceremony. I will assume the chair, if there are no objections. I will ascertain a motion ordering the nuptials to proceed. I assume a motion for the regular order. Reading of the minutes—discovered with. All in favor of the marriage of Theodore Carson and Virginia Saxton say 'Aye.'"

There was a swelling roar of "Ayes" that married Virginia into a belief that a political convention was in session in the parlor. Craighead called for the "Haps," with no response.

"It is a vote," said he. "Unanimously! I congratulate you on this harmony. It augurs well for a successful campaign and a triumphant election. Will some one volunteer to play the wedding march? Thank you, sir. May your own landing be as free from the gall."

This to the captain of the life-guard, who snatched himself on a pine-wood and ran his hands over the keys.

"And now, General," said Craighead to Carson, "all is ready. The statutes in such cases made and provided are all fulfilled. Bring out the bride and let the nuptial consummate."

"Craighead," said Carson, "come outside, and I'll break every bone in your body."

No one heard this but Craighead, and he received the announcement with the utmost of bows and a withdrawal with Carson on his arm. "Just a little delay," said he to Mr. Coryell. "You know how it is—but listen at bridesmaids, and ah—ah—ah—ah—but we must wait."

Mr. Coryell, with Craighead's money in his pocket sufficient in amount to pay the entire expenses of his vacation study of Atlantic gateposts, walked smilingly, rubbing his hands. Mr. Van Brunt lighted a cigar and looked officially grave. Carson stared Craighead by the throat in the privacy of the kitchen.

"What do you mean?" he started. "What mean thing is this?"

"Explanation," said Craighead, extracting his throat, "are unneeded for, I mean to me, but if given, require the use of the machine. Ah—how does that you done into me, boss?"

"What do you mean?" Carson stood before Craighead with clenched fist, furious at Craighead's scandalous use of Virginia's name in public.

"Strike, in due time," said Craighead, "but hear. You told me to do what I'd want done in your place. You said Virginia loved you—"

"I said I believed it," answered Carson, growling. "Oh, Craighead, Craighead! You've ruined me!"

"Ruined you—that is, of course, I disagree with you entirely. Fate has never won the money. I tell you the wedding bells are now ringing. Go to, sir—go to her. Give her the cash. Lay it on me. Throw a fit on the rug, rip and tear, snarl, weep, fight, faint, tear yourself, drink up stout, eat a cross-bird, take her in your arms, and incidentally mention the fact that the thing's a matter of record, and will be in all the papers. It'll work. Why, blast your picture, it's got to work! If it don't, I'm stuck for seventy-five dollars for fees and corruption money."

Carson walked back and forth, torn with rage, embarrassment, anxiety for the result with Virginia, troubled with a growing realization of what it might mean to him. "I'm going in to tell her," said he, "and if I fail I will come out and kill you, Craighead!"

"I shall make no will," said Craighead. "Who, if it were Caroline, and I go—"

Carson walked into Virginia's room. The serving girl withdrew and left them alone.

"Virginia," said he, "I'm going to take you with me."

She flushed redly, but woman-like refused to take his meaning. "I can't go back, unless," said she. "You told us your means. You are marked 'way, way down as an uncle. But I've forgiven you."

"Don't let's talk of that," said he. "I ain't even a pauper. I'm glad I deceived you. Glad, do you hear! And now you're going back, Psyche, as my wife. Don't struggle and try to escape. Don't you love me? Don't you love me? Don't you love me?"

She was past the struggle now, and as the servant maid's new gown given the lay in his arms, quite surrendered. Outside, the voice of Mr. Craighead rose and fell in eloquence uninterrupted save by sounds of applause. Like the orator who smokes the fagot until the great pauper approaches, Craighead was doing his best. Within, Carson, holding Virginia tight, repeated over and over the question, of which both knew the answer, but the answering of which made her his servant. And at last she buried her face in his breast and wordlessly nodded her head, at which he, with the lover's joy in his bride's blessing,

lifted her face and took his reward for waiting. The time passed much more rapidly for them than for Mr. Cringhead. His voice gave leave, the scarce periods grew shorter, and at last he rapped on the door and called, "Time!"

The audience had entered upon the phase of impatience characterized by stamping in seats.

"What do they want?" asked Virginia.

"Us," said Theodore. "Let us go out!"

"Out?" queried Virginia. "Out there?"

"Virginia," said Theodore, "did I not say I was taking you away with me? Now?"

"Oh!" gasped Virginia, shrinking back. "You don't mean for me to understand—"

"The minister is outside—to marry us—daring! Come!"

"Oh, Theodore," said she, "you aerial, aerial boy! Oh, I can't! Not to-day! I—I am not prepared. Oh, you presumptuous—"

Something smothered this reproach, which was not particularly, as if uttered into a waistcoat pocket. Virginia was being borne in minutes down the exultant stream upon which, at ordinary stages, the bark of courtship drifts exultantly for months. To go with Theodore—that was something immense, unrepeatable—some time, but to go now? No, she said with her face buried in his coat, she could not. Did she love him? Yes, oh, yes, she had got past denial of that. Did she trust him? How could he ask that! He knew she trusted him. He was the dearest, staunchest, most dependable, most trustworthy—Then who not now? Which brought the argument back to the stage of the outside? Why couldn't she? Oh, she couldn't, she couldn't. The door opened. Cringhead's voice came through in inquiry.

"All ready?" he asked loudly. "Then let the cortège move! Dispensing with the shamers, the fishbait, the rebuffs, the push and pullery, the trump and trumpany, and the instrument of two strings, let the piano's martial blast rouse the echoes of the past. To this is our orchestra reduced. After those cryptic—we shall have the full music of the grand-western song. Forward! March!"

The wedding march from "Lullalula" rattled feebly forth from the piano. The minister stood in the narrow crevice left open in the crowd. Cringhead, in a new-docked rubber, bowed grandly at the door and let them through. Theodore took the pump, pronounced arm, and disappeared in his car

promises which instinct told him would break down the last resistance. All things went rosy and purple and golden and pink before Virginia's eyes; her feet mechanically paced the short way, and she stood before the man in waters, the most divinely shame-faced bride ever led to the altar. The short service went on, as remembered by the priest.

"Who gives this woman away?"

And who but Fides Shayne, breaking through the press, took her by the hand and responded heartily, "I do!"

And when the ring was called for, who but the captain of the life-saving crew, true to the traditions of the service, came forward and took it from his chain, and saved them!

And when the minister asked, "Do you, Virginia, take this man to be your wedded husband?" and the dear old commander of it, who but Theodore turned dizzy at the bride's pause before answering, and who but Virginia said sweetly and clearly, "I do!"

And there was a whirl of congratulations, in which Mrs. Shayne joined, weeping most properly, and Carson hugged Cringhead purple again, and the world revolved back to the old baby-on-daisies, when no storm blew, and bowery joys—the joys, thank heaven, that are open to the young and good, no matter what their station in life. And when Cringhead's statement that the minister's waters were ominous of the deep-water love which the happy pair were getting tired of effort were to make the wedding dinner—at which the Shaynes sat down—more foolishly hilarious.

The wherryways were ripening at the wharf at Carson's Landing, the carpenter-birds were at their carpentry, the myrtle was fragrant, the oleander was in full bloom, the balsam oranges glowed golden from the trees, and the woodpeckers still wore their festoons of fire from tree to tree. Captain Harrod, removed far life from the solitude and temptations of the dunes, was busy mending bees, Aunt Chloe was scuffling about as of old, when a wharfe blew in the river, and a vessel put off at the landing Theodore and Virginia. The captain and Aunt Chloe could be wonder, for a change had come over the two they most loved. Virginia was clinging to Theodore's arm with both hands, and when they came to the door Theodore, picking Virginia up in his arms, carried her up the steps and over the threshold. And then Aunt Chloe knew.

"Milk sweet child!" she cried. "Milk drink honey! Ah know Youdd come. Ah know it."

"Aunt Chloe," said Virginia, "I'm not to blame. He abducted me."

"Ah'm powerful glad," said Captain Harrod. "You two sho' belong together. Ah wish you much joy."

"We're leaving that now," cried Virginia. "And we're come here, Aunt Chloe, not to make you any trouble, but to live—on live a thousand years in a month that won't seem but a minute. To be alone."

"We don't want anyone to know we're here," said Theodore. "This little girl is enough for me, and I for her. The rest of the world—it's lost."

"But some one knows a'ready, uh," said the captain. "We've done got a heap of telegrams fo' you."

"It's Crighthead, darling," said Theodore.

"Open them, dearest," said Virginia. "I hope the dear fellow— Oh, Mrs. Graybell bless him, I know. But open the telegrams."

In their order, the messages were opened. The first was dated New York, and was sent on the eve of his departure to leave her late. "An Caesar," said he, "consulted the oracles and diviners before going to battle, so do I, who am the Cause of the legal world, since the temporary injunction was made permanent and Shayne's given up. I prefer the art of the haruspex; but this is a legal holiday, and the five-dick market's closed. So I revert to the daily-petal divination. The halting places on the road that takes me to my Caroline are the petals on the dower of my fate, and to them I appeal. Move none. They end with 'She loves me' or Crighthead's obsequies may be anticipated."

"I can't understand him," said Theodore, "any better than when I found him in the garden."

"Oh, it's perfectly plain, sweetheart," cried Virginia. "Open the rest! Open the rest!"

The next was from Peckskill, and consisted of the three words "She loves me." The next, "She loves me not," was from Froughkrepps. Theodore, with Virginia sitting on his knee, read one after another, to the growing excitement of both. Of course it was foolish, but Crighthead was not to be judged by ordinary standards. He might have

worked himself up to a whimsical faith in this old-new divination. They were cut down at "She loves me not" from Albany, and closed by "She loves me" from Schoenestady. Not a word came in addition except "Harrod" added to "She loves me," sent from Chicago.

"Harrod!" cried Virginia.

"But wait!" said Theodore, pulling her back to the porch from which she had sprung. "There are several stops before he gets to Mr. Waddy's. Wait!"

"Heaven have mercy!" the next ran. "I thought it was all right. Again the fall-guy of destiny, I must go on a local train. All in the air again. Oh, that this too, too silly folk might rest!"

On they went with the reading, and from one little Illinois town after another came the "She loves me" and the "She loves me not" of the despairing Crighthead. At last there came from the town of the Slattery Institute a wall of delight. "She loves me not! The gods have done me that! Back to Chicago on the next train—and then the *Est Merit*! I am still the Great Unruffled!"

"Oh, the crazy fellow!" Virginia cried, her eyes full of tears. "Can't we do something? That telegram came this morning. There must be time. Oh, he'll destroy his life—for a whim!"

"They's another done come since dem," said Chloe. "The boy just done gone when you come. Heah it is."

They were consciously wrought up in opening it.

"She loves me!" it read. "One of those petals was a water-tank. Caroline says so. Bless be the man who first invented tanks. Carols later. I have scored. The simple life henceforth. Come to the wedding. Did you notice how I grasped the skirts of happy chance and grappled with my evil star? Oh, the game is easy when you learn it! From this day let no man be so dippy as to fall. She loves me." Signed "The Great Crighthead—man to be recognized as Greater Crighthead."

"Oh, oh," cried Virginia. "What a load of our minds, sweetheart. Isn't—h—s—good—world!"

You may fill up the blank yourself, Virginia did.